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PERFORMANCE, PHOTOGRAPHY, PERFORMATIVITY: WHAT PERFORMANCE 'DOES' IN THE STILL IMAGE

by
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
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ABSTRACT

Auslander (2006) states that images generated from performance documentation and practices stemming from performance to camera could be considered 'performative' if they are meant to be seen as happening in the 'now' they are viewed, with the spectator as the current intended audience. This thesis takes Auslander's supposition and situates the term performativity within an established academic discourse as a social, political or cultural 'doing' and questions what, apart from performing, performance 'does' in its transcription to a photographic image. I propose a 'doing' occurs because the intentional performance of a given act invokes the power of citation, in turn setting in motion broader cultural references. The contribution to knowledge this thesis makes is the proposition that aspects of the agency of performativity cannot be fully present in the moment of performance, but can be subsequently revealed by the photographic image as it affords the *différance* [distance/deferral] the spectator requires to consider the action within a wider structural unconsciousness.

Originating from a conceptualist tradition of using 'art as experiment', the hypothesis is tested heuristically using a practice-based method of performance to camera. This is presented in the manner of autoethnographic fieldwork, which explores the time-based tensions between performance and photography in three different ways. Firstly, through instantaneous performance actions and the subsequent withdrawal of motion in the still image; secondly, the staging of one-off performance interventions and how they are perceived outside of the time and place in which they occurred via the photograph; and lastly, how repetition is used as a visual device to allow the spectator to 'revisit' their framework of understanding. By connecting critical reflection of these photographic investigations to theoretical perspectives, each chapter concludes how viewing the performance outside of the live act in the form of a photograph uncovers the 'doing' of its performativity.

The final conclusion reviews why performativity surpasses the presence/absence binary previously perceived in photographic documentation, and how we might revise our usage of the term 'performative' in the area of performance to camera and studies of performance documentation in the light of these discoveries.

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To the reader: thank you for your time and consideration. I hope you see this both as the academic argument it is, as well as an exploration of the practice of photography itself from an outsider who is essentially a wilful amateur. Sometimes 'exploring' is the 'knowing'.

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Notes for the reader

1. This thesis uses footnotes where it is felt an indicative awareness of other discourses is required, where further personal observations add to the detail or to embellish on quotations/citations from the source cited to further explain its relevance to the main body of the text, usually through additional quotation and/or relation to the position of other theorists. This is to avoid overlong in-text citations and to highlight broader views and perspectives that do not contribute to the main trajectory of the thesis narrative, but do provide a helpful expansion when simply citing the idea or source does not explain the full scope of its complexity.

2. Where a term appears in square brackets outside of direct quotation, it indicates an alternative – yet equivalent – phrasing to the word that appears directly before. For example: *“It could be said that photography writes [transcribes] performance.”*

This suggests there may be several equivalent ways to describe some terms that have more academic justification throughout the text.

3. Throughout I refer to the ‘spectator’ as the intended viewer of the photograph. This is from Rancière’s (2009a) definition of the word in which he states:

Artists construct the stages where the manifestation and effect of their skills are exhibited, rendered uncertain in the terms of the new idiom that conveys a new intellectual adventure. The effect of the idiom cannot be anticipated. It requires spectators who play the role of active interpreters, who develop their own translation in order to appropriate the 'story' and make it their own story.

(Rancière, 2009a: 22)

Where comments are made about the spectator, this is not an indication of how the spectator *will feel*, nor is it to be read as that which has been tested and proven, but a comment on intended effect, guided by the influence of the artist.

CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

Introduction

Ever since Phelan (1993: 146)¹ denounced the documentation of performance as a 'betrayal' of liveness, the relationship between performance and the documents generated through the act of documentation has been contested. Debates from the 1990s onwards ranged from the practical, such as the advice of Erickson (1999) who prescribes black and white photography primarily as a 'reminder' of performance, to the phenomenological². In the case of the latter, Amelia Jones (1997: 16) uses the example of Carole Schneeman's *Interior Scroll* (1975) to illustrate how photographs of performance can act as an ontological and 'indexical access point' to the performance to surpass the binding constraints of space and time. She calls this 'presence in absentia' or a way of 'being there without having been there'³.

Auslander (1999: 19) also points out the disputable terminology of the word 'liveness', as liveness automatically places itself as diametrically opposed to 'recorded' performance. As such, it problematises the idea of 'the live' as the word itself dictates that its opposite (which he supposes is 'the mediated') would have to have existed contemporaneously when the reason for employing its usage is the advance in technology that has enabled performance to be

¹ From text: "Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance."

² See also Bay-Cheng (2007), McCauley (1994), Melzer (1995) and Rye (2003), all of whom write about documentation strategies in a 'post-Phelan' perspective, recognising that documentation is both a practical necessity and possibly also limited in its ability to capture performance. Reason (2006) also explores this at length.

³ Auslander (2006) draws parallels with this and Benjamin's (1969: 220-221) idea of 'reactivation'. Though it would seem his essay *Art In The Age Of Mechanical Reproduction* appears to support a thesis of unrepeatable or uniqueness, Benjamin himself talks of the ability to reactivate artistic works as an integral component to experiencing the artefact, such as playing a record to evoke the time and place in which it was recorded. There is a passage where Benjamin mentions this effect: "Above all, it enables the original to meet the beholder halfway be it in the form of a photograph or a phonograph record... And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced" (pp. 220-221). Though Benjamin's work is often cited to argue the case for authenticity and valuing the original live moment, Benjamin himself recognises the importance of 'reactivation' because of the very limiting constraints of time and space, which this thesis attempts to go some way in describing as a process. Auslander (2018) will take up Benjamin's idea of reactivation in his new publication, due to be published after this thesis is examined.

documented⁴. Dixon (2007: 127) notes there are a series of problems with this 'reductionist' approach to liveness, especially in an age where digitised performance is so prolific. Stated 'in phenomenological terms', liveness has more to do with 'now-ness' than corporeality whatever the performance form. Likewise Wolska (2005: 94) indicates that performance should be seen as 'an act of creation' with ephemerality as a generative process rather than the various documents produced from it seen as 'leftovers' or 'supplementary' to the performance itself. And Schneider's (2001, 2007, 2011) arguments that performance continues to remain within the ephemera it produces have contributed significantly to the discourse of documentation.

In light of these developments, we might ask if there is a satisfactory antonym to liveness, as 'unliveness', 'deadness' and 'undeadness' might have equivalent status⁵ but each in their own way lack the definition to articulate the full complexity of the argument. Furthermore, documentation has in the past been used as an *intentional* strategy to widely disseminate and propagate performance beyond the performance act itself, more specifically in the form of gallery-exhibited photography. That is to say there are instances in the history of live art where the photograph has been strategically presented as the primary encounter with the performance. This issue has been raised by Grant (2002: 43) who discusses the work of Ana Mendieta and Marina Abramovic to illustrate the heavy editorial control employed by the performance artist for the reception of photographic documentation to be received as they intended. Grant says that performance documentation "is revealed as a strategic, sophisticated and often overlooked tactic, staged in order to maintain the complexity of these images and descriptions."

Auslander (2006) develops these arguments proposing throughout live art's history photography has often been regarded as 'the' work of art over the performance itself and highlights cases where the lines between performance documentation and conceptual photography become blurred. As an example, he uses Chris Burden's *Shoot* (1971) – where Burden asked a friend to

⁴ Auslander uses Greek theatre as an example, which never had the dichotomy of live/mediatised as the technological 'media' to which he refers did not exist at the time.

⁵ As mentioned, Auslander (1999) suggests that 'mediatised' could be the counterpart and that there was no 'live' theatre before the advent of technology able to record it. Rather than providing an answer, this poses a problem in that it suggests a perceived underlying binary structural opposition that previously privileged 'the live'. In a poststructural age, we might consider that there is an unsatisfactory 'in-between' here that cannot be easily resolved.

shoot him in the arm with a rifle. This 'performance' took place in a gallery with just Burden, a few friends, the photographer Alfred Lutjeans and the gunman⁶.

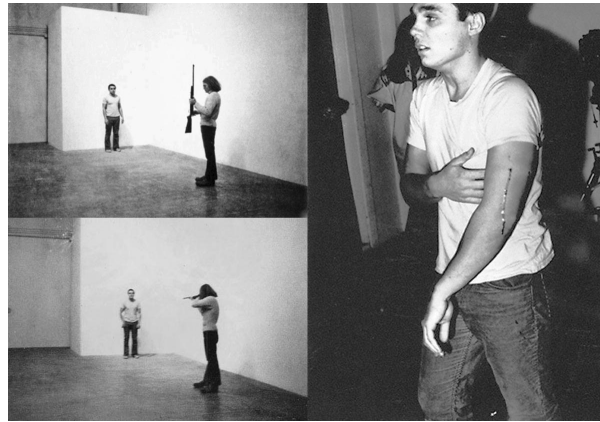


Figure 1.1 – Shoot, Chris Burden (1971) © Chris Burden

The piece is still widely considered 'performance' even though it only exists as a photograph and we might suggest that the way the performance was experienced for a vast majority of people who are familiar with the work was solely through the document. This photograph becomes the primary medium through which the 'liveness' of the performance continues to be activated and represented: formulated as a document it implicitly recognises that producing a photograph of that moment would allow for re-enactment of aspects of the performance whenever it was viewed at a later point in time. The image of the gun implies the sound of the shot firing, but the limited audience is not made evident. This detailing shows an awareness of editing, with the artist selecting the details that are intended to be received at an unspecified date yet to come. In the context of *Shoot*, the gun seems an immediate and important visual element whereas the apparent absence of 'witnesses' presupposes an alternative future audience who will view the performance from a different position in time and space.

This challenges Phelan's ontological 'witnessing' or the necessity to have an audience present for something to be classified as a performance. Existing performance documents have been accepted into the live art canon with the only discernable 'audience' being present at the point at

⁶ As discussed by O' Dell (2007: 35) who points out that the photographer has been 'historically invisible' in the contract-like agreement that pertains to the 'recording' of live events even though he or she may be 'the most engaged in the material sense'. Hence I have made a conscious effort to name Lutjean as he is someone lost in the canonical expansion of these documents 'as event'.

the time the photograph is viewed. Therefore, it is possible that these photographs could be seen to be in conflict with the idea of an 'original' performance, as the original performance for many would be the first encounter with the photograph.

It also opposes her assumption that documentation functions as 'reproduction'. If the aim of the performance is to produce a photograph, then the photograph becomes a vehicle for the performance rather than a purely descriptive or illustrative image. Live art documentation functions on a similar level to a myriad of practices that use performance to camera in order to produce a photograph, such as Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills* (1977-1980) or Claude Cahun's photographic work (as in *Aveux non-avenus*, 1930).



Figure 1.2 – *Leap Into The Void*, Yves Klein (1960) © Yves Klein

Auslander then goes one step further and uses Yves Klein's *A Leap Into The Void* (1960) – which Klein describes as a 'performance' – to infer that in phenomenological terms a photograph can give the impression of a performance occurring even though this particular photograph was produced using montage and studio compositing techniques⁷.

Auslander poses the question of the difference between Burden's work and that of Klein's, if we see documentation as being *performative*. He answers:

⁷ This is detailed in Jones (1994: 554), in which she writes that Klein had no audience apart from "close friends and photographers" when he jumped (which he did several times, "attempting to get the desired transcendent expression on his face") and used a protective net that does not appear in the photograph, which is actually a composite of two different shots unified in the darkroom. Jones points out that Klein actually exposed the theatricality of his image by publishing two different versions of it.

If we are concerned with the historical constitution of these events as performances, it makes no difference at all... We cannot dismiss studio fabrications of one sort or another from the category of performance art because they were not performed for a physically present audience. My suggestion that performance art is constituted as such through the performativity of its documentation is equally true for both Burden's piece and Klein's.

(Auslander, 2006: 8)

Furthermore, Auslander asserts the idea that documentation does not serve merely as a reminder, instead supposing that a photograph could be seen as a performance in itself. He writes that the power, presence and authenticity of these pieces does not derive from looking at the photograph as an indexical access point to a past event – nor from seeing performance as just a live medium – but instead “from perceiving the document itself as a performance that directly reflects an artist's aesthetic project or sensibility and for which we are the present audience (ibid.: 9).”

Here there are a series of points Auslander makes that need further clarification. First of all, he states his usage of the word performativity is “in its most basic sense” (ibid.: 5) and creates a broad definition of J.L. Austin's (1975) speech-act theory⁸ to describe performance documentation as ‘performative’. Secondly, whether consciously or unconsciously, Auslander talks specifically about photographic documentation and describing photographic material as ‘performative’ does raise the question of the specifics of performance and photography's relationship as opposed to the way textual or filmed material is considered ‘performative’. For example, we might consider that a play text is performative in the way that it is transcribed and then happens as it is ‘spoken’. But to consider photographs as ‘speech acts’ or ‘citations’ that are enacted on their visual encounter needs further contextualisation within the established academic background of the word ‘performativity’. There is an unexplored supposition here that images can ‘say’, ‘utter’ or ‘do’ and if this is the case then we need to ascertain how the performance act ‘speaks’ as a still image. Thirdly, some consideration is required as to whether

⁸ From text pp. 6, Austin describes a performative statement as follows: “A) though they may take the form of a typical indicative sentence, performative sentences are not used to describe (or “constate”) and are thus not true or false; they have no truth-value. B) Second, to utter one of these sentences in appropriate circumstances is not just to “say” something, but rather to perform a certain kind of action.”

it is *specifically* the time-based tensions between photography and performance that produces a 'performative effect'.

Lastly, we could argue that performance produces documents in the act of documentation, but are all documents *documentary*⁹? There is an implicit notion to consider that perhaps performance documentation does not sit within the realm of the documentary. Are there practices that reside here and cross the line between documentary and 'art document' or 'artefact' when the artist is primarily concerned with producing 'documentation' over 'the documentary'¹⁰? If we take Auslander's supposition, the effect the artist is intending in producing this documentation is 'performative' and 'documentary' photographs are purely constative, or 'descriptive'.

There are aesthetic, ethical and philosophical considerations to 'the documentary photograph' and, when Auslander cites Chris Burden, Cindy Sherman and Gina Pane as evidence we should understand that 'these artists used documentary stylistic choices, but had the intention for this performance to be viewed through the medium of the photograph *as performative*'. Maude-Roxby (2014) touches on this, mentioning in particular that black and white film with a high ISO (giving a grainy effect) would have met the needs of the movement or action of the work. Now these choices are *aesthetic* and can be added with a simple filter, so we need to consider the use of performance to camera as a documentation strategy. Though these performances for camera can both be seen as documentary of performance and as 'performative photography' simultaneously, it is with this acknowledgement that the artist knows that the performance is to be received through the photograph and not through the live moment.

Almost two decades on, Phelan (2010: 55) does concede that by the end of the 20th century performance had achieved its deepest dialogue with photography, describing 'the photographic effect' as a 'double now' constituting two acts and two temporalities: the 'now' of the interpretive

⁹ I refer to a quote from Evans (1983: 216) as an example of this perspective, in which he says: "When you say 'documentary', you have to have a sophisticated ear to receive that word. It should be documentary style, because documentary is police photography of a scene and a murder ... That's a real document... Therefore art is never a document, but it can adopt that style. I do it. I'm called a documentary photographer. But that presupposes a quite subtle knowledge of this distinction."

¹⁰ Auslander additionally suggests that photographs that are meant to be seen as 'documentary' are 'constative' documents – ones that describe, rather than 'do'. This particular supposition is still up for debate and I deal with the idea of performative and constative photography in the following conclusion of the thesis.

act occurring when the photograph is taken and the 'now' of the interpretive act that happens when the photograph is viewed. She states that photography was formerly seen as a useful tool for documenting and preserving performance, but "this way of thinking has led to a too-rigid separation between the two forms. We have tended to fetishise the uniqueness of live performance [and tended to ignore] the performances involved in taking and seeing photographs" (ibid.: 54). Though Phelan questions the ethical potential of accepting such a temporal register, the acknowledgement then challenges her former assumptions about liveness. Talking about it directly in relation to photography provides the implication that the photograph does, in fact, have its own sense of performance-like presence that asserts itself in a similar – but not simultaneous – temporal space as performance.

The assertion here is that the photograph has historically been used as a vehicle for performance and there has been an intentional choice on behalf of several artists to use photography rather than 'liveness' as a way to disseminate and exhibit certain performances. To further investigate Auslander's assertion that a) these practices can sit within the live art canon and b) the reason for this is the 'performativity' of these photographic documents, a few elements are left open to exploration.

Primarily there is a need to ascertain what the term 'performativity' could mean in relation to photographic practice, especially in practices that work with performance to camera or performance as a mode of investigation. Then there is the question of why an artist working with performance might choose to use photography as the medium for a particular performance act, as the doing of the work as a 'live' performance and its doing as a photograph might have different effects.

The question is what, beyond performing, does performance 'do' [speak, say, utter] on its transcription to a still image? By exploring this proposition, the contribution to knowledge this thesis makes is to detail how *performance* becomes *performative* in the still photographic image employing a practice-based heuristic method to test out existing theoretical assertions and uses the findings to help generate a new critical framework. The reason for employing practice is that a large body of the literature in this area theorises how photography and performance documentation operates by examining examples that have already been produced and, in some cases, work that has been largely canonised and discussed as having existing epistemic value. In response, I use critical texts as a generative and contextual tool to proactively produce

images from which assertions and conclusions of how performativity operates in the still image are drawn. The value is then placed on the intrinsic merit of 'doing' through practice and how the active creation of work constructs its own knowledge. In this way, the contribution made is equally asserted both through the learnings gained from practice as well as the new conceptual framework it generates as a result of the evaluation of practical investigations conducted during the artistic research process.

From performance to performativity

On interrogating 'performativity', it is essential to define what using the term might mean. A common misconception, especially in the field of performance, is that it means 'performance-like'. Both Taylor (2003: 6)¹¹ and Hall (2006) recognise this misnomer, and have proposed the terms 'performatic' and 'performic' respectively as substitutes to describe the performing or performance-like quality that objects, situations or texts might possess.

The academically disseminated definition of performativity, however, originates from J.L. Austin's speech-act theory (1975): in *How To Do Things With Words*, Austin states that 'performatives' are utterances that constitute an action within themselves, such as saying "I now pronounce you man and wife" or "I christen this ship the HMS Victoria". Auslander uses this to take a metaphorical leap and applies it to imagery and, though a legitimate comparison, Auslander conveniently uses J.L. Austin's speech-act theory without discussing performativity in its other uses¹², or how it has been expanded on, critiqued or developed by other theorists.

So, if we are saying that photography is performative in Austin's original sense, we are not necessarily saying that it performs, but that it 'does': that it enacts something in the now in which we are viewing it. We are also saying that, if something is performative, then it is derived from a linguistic construct – an act of speech. Therefore, we cannot say that the photograph is performative solely because we have documented or utilised it with a 'performative' intention¹³, we also have to investigate the photograph's performativity as a visual citation that produces something between itself and its audience in a shared temporal space.

¹¹ Taylor suggests borrowing *performatico* from Spanish.

¹² For example by referencing the work of Judith Butler (1990 [1999]), who would be an immediate reference point for anyone attempting to define performativity.

¹³ This is Auslander's proposition.

The problem for artists working in the live or visual arts is not – as Austin states and Auslander recognises – how to ‘do’ things with words, but in fact how to make statements without using words. Then, as a consequence, how to do things using just images. The encoding of ‘utterances’ into a ‘visual language’ to be transcribed by the photograph is a difficulty recognised by Barthes (1977), who proposes that imagery is a complex system of signs:

One can venture that the world of total meaning is torn internally (structurally) between the system as culture and the syntagm as nature: the works of mass communications all combine, through diverse and diversely successful dialectics... withdrawn into a few discontinuous symbols, which men 'decline' in the shelter of their living speech.

(Barthes, 1977: 55)

Barthes is caught between the ‘universality’ of some visual cues and the role of culture, which provides a subjective rendering onto some symbols. The combination of these provides a ‘reading’ of the image that relates to this ‘living speech’. However, Barthes does touch on the fact that some signs – though individually interpreted – rely on certain constructs of language to evoke a dialogue with the image.

This aspect is also accepted by Derrida (1988: 18) who, in his critique of Austin’s performativity, says it is not enough to say that language merely does: language and its performances are based around established citations that conform to an iterable model: “Could a performative statement succeed if its formulation did not repeat a ‘coded’ or iterable statement... [if] they were not identifiable as conforming to an iterable model, and therefore if they were not identifiable as a ‘citation’?”

To relate this to the still image, Barthes points out that the ‘language’ of an image is a complex and interwoven system of signs and semiotics, and these could be considered within Derrida’s terms as ‘citations’. The photograph calls upon signs and systems that have encoded implicit inferences that the viewer is asked to ‘read’ when it is received, then interpret and consequently enact at the point of reception.

The important thing to emphasise here, though, is the 'doing' element of these citations. If we are to describe imagery as performative, then we are talking of it 'enacting' or 'activating' and that as a consequence of it being viewed, something then transpires. Using the term performativity has an inference of a 'reality-producing' effect: an aspect that not only enacts in our imaginations, but has an effect within the physical world it inhabits. Dorothea von Hantelmann (2010) highlights:

[Performativity] means to recognise and bring into discourse the productive, reality-producing dimension of, in principle, any work of art. What the notion of the performative brings into perspective is the contingent and difficult to grasp realm of impact and the effects that art brings forth... Art's performative dimension signifies art's possibilities and limits in generating and changing reality.

(Von Hantelmann, 2010: 18)

Furthermore, Von Hantelmann draws links between Austin and Derrida's sense of performativity and a broad interpretation of Judith Butler's (2011 [1993]: 95)¹⁴ work on performativity to explain how art produces action or motivation not by reality or intention, but because it derives from conventions it then cites and actualises. She says, "Only pre-existing conventions render a present speaking powerful, enabling it to produce effects that go beyond language, entering the realm of reality" (Von Hantelmann, 2010: 19).

One of the issues in the idea of equating performativity with citation in relation to live art or performance is that the genre has previously championed the radical, the ephemeral, and the anti-structuralist. In other words, to say that performance acts can be coded or cited by the photograph, or that somehow there are rules or structure to how performance and its photographic documentation can be captured and subsequently 'read' contradicts the spontaneous, impulsive 'liveness' that underpins the ethos of the genre. Within Butler's (2011 [1993], 1999 [1990]) model of performativity, there is no such thing as outside, but the fact live art strives to break conventions means it attempts to defy any iterable models. By the Butlerian

¹⁴ From Butler (2011 [1993]: 95): "Performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed by a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject."

definition of performativity, any radical break with conventions must fail – that singular expressive acts considered to be outside of existing citations are not possible.

Though the reproductive element of photography's dissemination (e.g. printing photographs) may be seen as 'replicable', the act of photographing itself shares many synergies with performance. There is something about the popular misconception of the 'point and click' aspect of photography that proliferates the falsehood it is somehow 'easy' to take a photograph¹⁵, which is a dilemma that Shusterman (2012) wrestles with, revealing that the performative process of photography is not given due attention. He describes a 'complex performative process' that occurs before the shutter release and the camera's ensuing mechanism of producing the photographic image. This includes the elements of pose and mise-en-scene that have to be 'framed' by the photographer. There are myriad directional and technical aspects and choices the photographer and subject makes that need to be taken into consideration – each of these also has their own intention, skill and effect. He writes:

Moreover, as an experiential event, the performance is transient and cannot strictly speaking be perfectly repeated. Though the photograph documents in some way the performative process through which it is engendered, it only documents a particular moment in that process and does so from a particular angle and in terms of its visual qualities.

(Shusterman, 2012: 73)

Here, Shusterman highlights that photography has an 'unrepeatability' to it that live art has so prized. The implicit motion of this argument is that each photograph is, in fact, unique rather than subject to 'mechanical' reproduction or able to be replicated perfectly. No one image is like any other and even if the subject assumes the 'same' pose, the outcome is rarely identical. Because of this, there is a selection process in editing that occurs to pick the photograph that 'best illustrates' the moment. This demonstrates a similar difficulty found both in documenting

¹⁵ Roberts (2014: 76-92) writes a very good chapter on the 'labour' of photography that explains this point, and how the domestic snapshot has, in some instances, lessened the perceived labour and/or 'artistic' value behind the act of photography. Sontag (1977: 53) cites Kodak's 1888 advertising slogan as the source of this myth: "One click and we do the rest". Sontag (2003: 28) also writes that photography "is the only major art in which professional training and years of experience do not confer an insuperable advantage over the untrained and inexperienced". This may have oversimplified the technique of photography somewhat for academics and critics of visual culture.

performance and in performance for camera where no two images are the same, highlighting the difficulty of capturing performance.

If we take this leap, we can then see why photographic practice stemming from performance for camera and performance documentation have formerly been equated or confused. If a performance is documented with the acknowledgement that it is going to be received in photographic form at some point in the future, then even though the outcome may be 'unintentional' when performing primarily for audience, there is still a considered thought process behind it. Similarly, in events entirely staged for camera, this intention behind its future reception is already acknowledged. However, this doesn't negate the unexpected outcomes that Shusterman (2012) raises as an 'unrepeatability' of the photographic moment. Though both mediums have their intended outcomes, there is still an element of unpredictability that is refined or highlighted further in the selection and editing process.

Beyond the nature of difficulty and uniqueness in the process, it is perhaps photography's intentional ambiguity that leaves so much room for interpretation. If we return to the idea of the photograph as a 'linguistic construct', then it is left intentionally full of gaps. In fact, the 'performative power' of the photograph relies on these gaps and is discussed by Baetans (2009: 146) as *lacunae* or 'missing text'. Explaining that the photograph 'shows' rather than 'tells', this mechanism of 'showing' allows an audience to fill in the blanks themselves and come up with their own individual connection to, and performance of, the still image. He writes that "the more any one medium attempts to explain, justify, unfold or conclude its own narrative, the more its narrative power diminishes". He further explains that juxtaposing photography against a medium like film, for example, film becomes very 'flat' in narrative terms as it dictates to the viewer exactly how the arc plays out. In the still image a range of responses are possible and invited.

Within this model, though, is the explanation that a photograph of a performance can have the same evocative quality as performance: by using pre-existing conventions, the photograph's performativity stems from active cues that suggest an action or statement to the person viewing it. Though the photograph appears to be 'frozen' in time, the fact it is stuck in its own loop falls in line with live art's core ethos; that no repetition of a gesture or individual moment is identical¹⁶. Von Hantelmann writes:

¹⁶ We could also refer to Deleuze (2009 [1968]: 1) here, who states in *Difference and Repetition* that pure repetition is 'opposed to natural law'. He writes: "Reflections, echoes, doubles and souls do not

[Repeating acts] contain not only reproductive but also differentiating or deviating moments. For Butler, it is only within this nexus of convention and innovation, repetition and difference that any action directed towards change can happen.

(Von Hantelmann, 2010: 18)

As the photograph begins to repeat the utterance it portrays, it also deviates, changes, innovates and becomes different every time it is seen. Therefore, the photograph is not frozen at all, but an ever-changing citation of a performative utterance. Explaining performativity in relation to the still image and its performance counterpart goes some way towards marrying what was previously seen as conflicting. In performative terms, it is possible for the photograph to have the same continuously differentiating element as performance, as the utterance is repeatedly evolving through every enactment of its citation. Every time it is seen, it invites another reading of the performance.

Différance: photography as ‘deferred performance’

In employing the term ‘performativity’, we signal an awareness of the way the present gesture is always an iteration or repetition of preceding acts. It therefore points to a wider collective dimension of speech and action. Derrida would argue there is no such thing as a ‘performance’ that is not a repetition, since iterability is a structural characteristic of every mark (Derrida, 1988: 15). For him, it is impossible to distinguish between citational statements on one hand, and singular, original statements on the other. This is because an intention to say or do anything can never be entirely present to itself; there is always at work what he calls a ‘structural unconsciousness’ (ibid.: 18). The distinction is useful for thinking about different art practices and the aims associated with them. The term ‘performative’ in relation to performance to camera then could be reserved for the work of those artists who are interested in displacing spontaneity, self-expression and immediacy by putting into play repetition and the iterative character of the citation.

belong to the domain of resemblance or equivalence... To repeat is to behave in a certain manner, but in relation to something unique or singular which has no equal or equivalent”. Therefore, repetition of citation does not necessarily mean to ‘replicate exactly’, and this is true of both the performance act as utterance and of the spectator’s visual reception of the image.

Iversen (2009: 840) makes a point about these statements in relation to describing photographic works as 'performative' and to her "performative photography involves the partial abdication of authorial control, in favour of accident, chance or unforeseen circumstances". In this way, live art-based practice seems an apt channel for the performative in that unpredictable or unrepeatable outcomes produce unpredictable photographs. This element of 'chance', she argues, occurs through a methodical or instructional process – one that plays on the inherently iterative and repetitive role of 'the instruction'.

When an artist working with performance chooses photography as the medium to channel their performance, then they are also engaging with a switch in temporal register. As a consequence, we might view the reason for employing photography in performance practices through the lens of Derrida's concept of *différance* (1988: 7)¹⁷. Derrida describes speech and thought having a much more simultaneous relationship, albeit that there is still a delay between these two modes. Writing, though, takes place at a much further point away from the original thought, inviting a gap that he calls *différance* or 'difference/deferral'.

In the same way, we could look at performance and its photographic transcription as having the same relationship between presence and a kind of 'transcribed presence' (*énoncément* and *énoncé* in Derrida's terms) in writing. There is a much more simultaneous relationship between thought and performance act, but when the shutter on the camera closes, the performance act is instantaneously removed from a linear temporal structure.

¹⁷ Though I refer to *Limited Inc* (1988: 7, 19) to illustrate the difference between the indicative active present to the utterance and then a later statement of that utterance, Derrida takes up this term originally in *Of Grammatology* (1978: 23): "Entity and being, ontic and ontological are, in an original style, derivative with regard to difference; and with that respect to what I shall later call *différance*, an economic concept designating the production of differing/deferring". Also, in *Writing and Difference* (Derrida, 1976: 293) he suggests that *différance* is a means of resolving implicit hierarchical linguistic conflicts. Thus, *différance* seems an apt term to resolve the difference/deferral between performance modes in the live and the photographic.

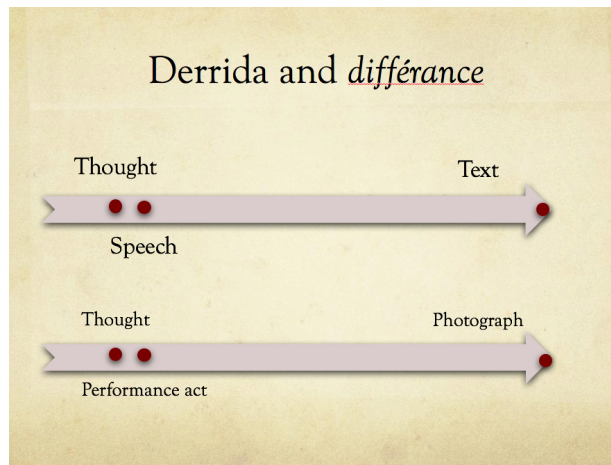


Figure 1.3 – A diagram illustrating Derrida’s idea of *différance* in terms of photography and performance

Derrida (2009) illustrated the terms of this delay when talking about the photography of Jean-François Bonhomme, writing, “Whence my passion for delay, and for the delay within delay... the technique that goes by the name of the delay mechanism, the automatic timer, or the automatic shutter release [dispositif-retard, déclenchement-retard, le retard automatique]. At once banal in its possibility and singular and unprecedented in its operational workings, it has given rise today to mechanisms that are so much more sophisticated than so many imaginable sophistications” (Derrida, 2009: 19). Derrida highlights the shutter, the eye of the mechanism, as the component that has the potential to enrich the temporality of the image.

Hence, the camera shutter becomes a surgical knife that causes the caesura and splits the performance in two: one part of the performance continues to exist in the physical realm, the other captured by the photograph. If we think of performance like a cell, the shutter on the camera separates the original cell into two halves. They contain the same raw material, but as they become separate parts of the same whole they divide, multiply and propagate independently. Thus the photograph has the ‘life’ of performance because it comes from the same original cell as performance and contains the same building blocks of the performance’s life. The performance captured by the camera, severed by the shutter, becomes the initiation of a performative utterance embodied in photographic form and starts the citation.

But performance and the ‘performance act as performative utterance’ is the initiating force that sets this loop in motion. Whether the performance act is part of a longer durational or theatrical performance or a performance to camera that lasts as long as the shutter is open, the effect provides an initiating force through performance. Performance sets the citation in motion and

this motion continues, repeats and deviates. Therefore, the photograph moves away from something that is dead, 'has been' and an access point to the past. Considered in this new perspective, the photograph can be seen as embodied with and by the life of performance and its 'aliveness' is enacted in the imagination once again when it is viewed.

This goes some way to explaining the 'how' behind Schneider's (2007) 'what' of 'interanimation': a term she uses to describe how performance can 'give life' to other objects. Using sculpture as an example, the pose is given life in the first instance by the body, then is enacted and re-enacted over time, playing out a recursive loop. This word has proved to be a useful addition to the vocabulary of explaining how documents could be seen to perform and the context outlined illustrates in the example of photography how it occurs. Schneider (2011) also describes the 'temporal drag' that live artists are stuck in and implies that a document of performance could have the same citational quality as performativity in that the act is 'repeated':

If a pose or a gesture or a move happens across time, what pulse of multiple time might a pose or a gesture or a move contain? Can a trace take the form of a living foot – or only in the form of a footprint? What time is a live act when a live act is reiterative? An action repeated again and again... has its own kind of staying power.

(Schneider, 2011: 37)

Différance also infers 'distance' and it must be recognised that not only are we working with time, but how distance affects the way in which it is viewed by its audience. In the case of the photograph, it becomes its own singularity in time and space: it breaks with the constant disappearance of performance and isolates an individual moment. Though as I have previously explained, if we accept the Butlerian conventions of performativity and pair it with Schneider's idea of 'looping', then this moment embodies a convention of live art – repetition with difference, same gesture, same moment, but with differing results enacted in the imagination of its audience.

As Auslander states, the photographic performance is always happening 'right now' on its visual reception, rather than considering the performance as 'having happened' in the photograph and – through reconstruction of the photograph as event – the photographic performance anticipates

all time scales. It predicates a series of 'future nows' in which the photograph might be seen and exists on all temporal levels: in the past, present and future.

Taken collectively, these ideas then explain how Barthes concept of the *studium* (2000 [1980]) becomes an enactment of the photographic performance. The *punctum*¹⁸ acts as a catalyst, puncturing and injuring the viewer, and the *studium*¹⁹ becomes a process through which the imagination heals that wound, allowing the respective spectators to animate the photograph, incorporate it within their subjective cultural understandings, experience it as a moment that has co-temporal presence and then respond accordingly to its performative provocation.

I use the word 'enactment' as opposed to Schneider's 're-enactment' because the latter term implicates that the performance is meant to be re-enacted exactly as it was performed in the first instance, or that the photograph is constructed in a 'script-like' manner that recites itself in exactly the same manner it is viewed. 'Enactment' accounts for a subjective interpretation and the 'repetition with difference' in the Butlerian convention of performativity: the individual performance that happens in the mind of the viewer may or may not be in strict terms a 're-enactment', but it does account for the perceived momentary animation of the photograph that appears to enact the performative statement. The spectator may additionally enact the photograph in several different ways, playing out the possibilities of what is happening both inside and outside the frame. Audiences whose first or only encounter with a performance is via the photograph (or performances that are specifically created for camera) do not necessarily experience these images as re-enactments, but a subjective enactment of an individual imagined performance for each spectator²⁰.

¹⁸ Barthes (2000 [1980]) describes the punctum as "a sting, speck, a cut hole... that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)" (ibid.: 27). He also describes it as having a 'latency' effect – that we can only identify the punctum after the fact (ibid.: 53). The deferred performance and the immediacy of the performative act could be behind some aspect the punctum that causes this 'injury', as 'latency' seems similar to Derrida's ideas of *différance*. Azoulay also touches on Barthes idea of 'photographic shock'; an intentional provocation by the photographer to the viewer of the photograph.

¹⁹ (ibid.: 26): "The studium is of the order of liking, not of loving; it mobilizes a half desire, a demi-volition; it is the same sort of vague, slippery, irresponsible interest one takes in the people, the entertainments, the books, the clothes one finds "all right." To recognize the studium is inevitably to encounter the photographer's intentions, to enter into harmony with [them]."

²⁰ Auslander (2006) also makes reference to the limitation of the word 're-enactment', suggesting instead 'revival'. This is footnoted as note 18 on pp. 10 in reference to his supposition: "In that sense, performance art documentation participates in the fine art tradition of the reproduction of works rather than the ethnographic tradition of capturing events" (ibid.: 6). Because these terms are still linked to the

Therefore, we can conclude here that when an artist chooses to use photography as a performance medium, they are intentionally dealing with the dimensions of time, distance and *différance* in order to ‘defer’ the performance. This mode of ‘deferred performance’ outlined provides its own contribution to the performative effect of photography. The effect of the provocation on the spectator is received through the process of enactment, and this process becomes the spectatorial ‘doing’ on reception of the image²¹.

A final consideration comes from Butler (2011 [1993]: 95), who distinguishes between ‘performance’ and ‘performativity’ by saying that performativity is a reiteration of norms that precede, constrain and exceed the performer and cannot be taken as the performer’s will and choice. In this manner, Butler describes how the performer can ‘perform’, but what the performative action *is performative of* will be something that is beyond what they have intentionally acted, as the performance act leads to an iteration that the performer cannot control and sometimes does not recognise within themselves as performer.

What we are then interrogating is how *performance* becomes *performative* on its transcription to a photographic still image. That is to say how ‘writing’ [transcribing] performance as a photograph engages with the idea of citational gestures and speech acts in order to become a ‘provocation’ or ‘utterance’ the spectator then enacts. Beyond performing or having a ‘performic’ quality, performance’s transcription and visual reception as a still image uses citational gesture(s) to place the artist back into a wider social and cultural map that the artist hopes will provoke a response from the spectator²², who – through enactment – configures it within their experience and understanding. *Performativity*, in this sense, can be defined as the way in which performance becomes a social, political or cultural provocation in the still image, when it calls on the power of citation to place itself within a wider cultural framework.

structural life/death, liveness/mediated opposition, I have chosen ‘enactment’ to suggest the photograph’s ‘similar but not simultaneous’ temporality as performance.

²¹ We could also reference Duchamp’s (1973: 138-141) *The Creative Act* as analogous to the concept of enactment, a process he describes as “a phenomenon comparable to a transference from the artist to the spectator in the form of an aesthetic osmosis taking place through the inert matter.”

²² As previously mentioned, I use the term spectator directly from Rancière’s definition of ‘the emancipated spectator’ from his eponymous 2009 book. Rancière looks at the spectator as an active interpreter rather than a passive observer of the ‘spectacle’ of the image (Rancière, 2009a: 22).

How photography deconstructs performance

In talking of *différance*, Derrida pointed towards a perceived linguistic hierarchy in language and his development of various methods of deconstruction were utilised to find the 'in betweens' or expose the traces of these oppositions to reveal their structural deficiencies. We could argue that Phelan's initial assertion was based on that perceived hierarchical structure in which experiencing performance 'in liveness' was the superior mode of its becoming, of the essence of its presence. Performance received via photography was seen as secondary, supplementary or as a 'referent'. However, this was based on the belief that an artist working with performance prioritises the live act and ignores in many instances its history the artists who *actively chose* the photograph as the primary vehicle for their performances.

Auslander gave the provocation to equate the two modes and, in doing so, 'performativity' arises as that which lies between; signalling the structural unconscious inherent in the act itself and exposing the tensions between the two media. Lepecki (2006) concludes his book by critiquing Phelan's assertion, saying if her idea of disappearance was founded in psychoanalysis, it is exactly the disappearance into unconscious that ensures its presence, writing:

If performance's life is in the present, its plunge into unconsciousness is what guarantees its persistent (yet a temporal) presentness, for the unconscious reveals only a temporal present tense of memory... Remembering as total surrender to memory is a very effective way to elude the passing of time.

(Lepecki, 2006: 127)

In the same way, the performing of these gestures sustained in photographic form both exposes performance's unconscious citation while simultaneously making use of photography's ability to 'call to presence' through imagery, memory and imagination, even if as Lepecki states that it is a temporal presentness.

I have analogised performance and photography with speech and writing and we could consider this as a form of deconstruction in Derrida's sense. By photographing performance, we frame it as a singular gesture in order for it to be 'read' by the spectator. Employing the two media in this way becomes a deconstructive act in itself, as it exposes the impossibility of both presence and

absence. Traditionally in deconstruction²³, writing is used as a way of finding ‘the trace’ and if we consider the notion of photography as transcription, as a form of writing performance, then it is conceivable that in using temporality as an important dimension of performativity, it is this time-based tension that erodes the presence/absence binary.

The transience of performance it is never fully present to itself: it is the optical unconscious allows us the distance from a linear construct of time in order to consider what the performance ‘cites’ in the still image. Performativity cannot be realised by the performer’s conscious knowledge because the performer can never be fully conscious of what they are citing in the embodied performance act. Conversely, photography is a forum in which the artist has chosen to be ‘always already absent’ as a signature of their own co-presence at a future time. In so doing, they enter the boundaries of presence and absence and expose terms like ‘liveness’ as problematic. If ‘what remains’ is only ever a trace – be it a memory of a live performance or a visual photographic cue to a wider act – it could be considered that it is the plunge of performance into the unconscious nature of ‘the performative’ that ‘does’.

If photography is a method of transcribing [writing] performance, *performativity* is the mark that arises from that deconstructive act – the trace exposed by this deconstruction. *Différance* is an intentional tool employed by the artist to allow the spectator the distance to consider that act within the understanding of a wider ‘structural unconscious’²⁴. The image does this in a way that is not afforded by liveness because the performer can see the act outside of his/her embodied self and, equally, the spectator is not governed by the social ‘contract’ of either viewing the performance within a negotiated space or an unintentional public one. What performance does in the still image is to act as a citation [call to action] to ‘push against’ its own disappearance, entering a continuing recursive, ever-changing loop of deferral that demands the spectator to resolve through enactment. The result is its performativity: an utterance that surpasses both the photograph and the performance to go *beyond* the image to cite the structural unconscious

²³ Derrida (1976: 25) first uses the terms to state that the occidental history of signs is essentially theological with reference to logocentrism. Derrida starts a metaphysical approach of semiology. He states that the concept of sign and deconstruction work are always exposed to misunderstanding. In the same page Derrida states that he will try to demonstrate that there is no linguistic sign without writing. Hence, in these terms, we could analogise that speaking of semiotics of presence for photographic works involving performance to camera are limited and that *performativity* may be a starting point for such analysis, given that we first must ‘transcribe’ performance to be able to ‘read’ and then ‘deconstruct’ it.

²⁴ I have adapted this from Derrida’s idea of the structural unconsciousness to refer to a wider idea of ‘an unconscious’ that is collective and cultural.

embedded in our civil imagination, coming into being 'as if it were'. Because of the tension between performance and photography, live and mediated, presence and absence, performativity arises as the 'doing' in the still image, and this loop can continue indefinitely. Hence, the two forums erode each other, leaving an exposure of the "transcendental signified"²⁵; an always-already hidden contradiction inside the previous hierarchy of terms that gives way to its own kind of presence.

Performance and photography: action and automatism

As a practitioner and academic working across performance and photography, my interest has always been in the way in which both photography and performance can be considered *time-based* disciplines. My practice typically possesses the ethos of unpredictability, spontaneity and the unplanned aspects of live art and aiming to capture moments of chance generated by this as a still image. It tests the idea of the 'originality' or 'one-off' nature of performance with the camera's unique automatism, where the camera's mechanics take precedence over a given operator's aesthetics²⁶. My fascination with this relationship is generated by the fact that certain features of the photograph are not within my own direct control, or occur by what *appears to be* chance due to the camera's sense of 'automatism', and that the contrast between 'intentional act of performance' and 'unintentional result of the photograph' lends something to these images.

Based on this, I would therefore make two suppositions about performance to camera: firstly, the photograph affords the performer a way to 'transcribe' [write] performance 'automatically' and that, secondly, pitting performance against photography is a way of testing the action of the

²⁵ From Derrida (1988: 26): "At the point at which the concept of *différance*, and the chain attached to it, intervenes, all the conceptual oppositions of metaphysics (signifier/signified; sensible/intelligible; writing/speech; passivity/activity; etc.) – to the extent that they ultimately refer to the presence of something present (for example, in the form of the identity of the subject who is present for all his operations, present beneath every accident or event, self-present in its "living speech," in its enunciations, in the present objects and acts of its language, etc.) – become non pertinent. They all amount, at one moment or another, to a subordination of the movement of *différance* in favour of the presence of a value or a meaning supposedly antecedent to *différance*, that is more original, exceeding and governing it in the last analysis. This is still the presence of what is termed above as the "transcendental signified"."

²⁶ It is important to note that this thesis uses a methodology in which the photograph is the product of an automated and/or mechanical process and that a photograph is not entirely the product of an agent's conscious control. It is suggested here that an artistic agent can have only a limited or inhibited responsibility for the salient features of a photograph. This puts the role of the 'operator' in the performances of chapter two as someone who merely 'operates' the mechanism rather than lends an artistic eye to the work.

live act against the automatism of the camera. I am borrowing the term 'automatism' from the surrealist André Breton (in Breton et al: 1997 [1924]: 19)²⁷ to mean both the automatic [mechanical] nature of the camera²⁸ and how photography functions as a mode of 'automatic writing [transcription]' for performance. Breton suggests that automatism allows the writer to reveal their unconscious desires in a direct and freely associative way. Similarly in my practice, photography 'writes' performance acts in order for them to reveal only that which can be unveiled from the camera's perspective as an 'onlooker' to that performance act. However, contrary to drawing on the artist's unconscious desires, the camera exposes the unconscious gesture of the performance act and draws on Benjamin's concept of the optical unconscious to bring to the fore, for both artist and spectator, how performance exceeds its own action to become something more than itself.

Benjamin (2005 [1931]: 511-512) says "it is through the camera that we first discover the optical unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis". Benjamin recognises photography has the ability to record aspects of reality that do not fit into the natural optics, because they are too quick, small or disperse. The resulting images allow a better 'analysis' as the image is "more easily isolated in its constituting elements, bringing to light entirely new structures of matter" (ibid.). Gascoyne (1985: 10-11) describes the Surrealists idea of automatic writing as "attempts to fix spoken thought... as rapid, spontaneous, unself-critical monologues". We might then see that photography operates in the same way for the performer: it is an attempt to 'fix' or 'freeze' an aspect of performance that generates an immediate, uncensored visual text to analyse through the lens of the optical unconscious²⁹. Taking this into consideration, we can then understand why the medium of photography, rather than the media of film or painting *per se*, would hold such fascination in its connection to performance. Sharing an instantaneous nature, it frames and snapshots the performance act into visual statements to generate an 'uncensored' text that taps into the unconscious.

²⁷ From text: "Pure psychic automatism ... the dictation of thought in the absence of all control exercised by reason and outside all moral or aesthetic concerns."

²⁸ Flusser (2000 [1983]: 32) discusses how 'apparatuses' are 'black boxes that simulate thinking' and "even apparatuses that are not fully automated... play and function better than the human beings that operate them". This suggests Flusser had some awareness of the camera's automated 'power'. Sontag (1977: 52-53) also recognised surrealism, semi-automatism, photography and automatic imagery.

²⁹ Both Breton and Benjamin were well aware of and employed the Freudian idea of psychoanalysis, and it is reasonable to say that both their ideas of automatism and the optical unconscious were born out of its influence.

This idea of the unconscious and its relationship to photography also impacted on Derrida's (1978: 196-231) metaphorical employment of photographic terms. He cites Freud's concept of the 'mystic writing-pad' – a psychic apparatus as a kind of writing³⁰ – as analogous to 'the machine' referencing a link between machine and representation [camera and image] and, in his reading of Freud, there exists the so-called spontaneity of memory the work of the trace, repetition, automaticity, absence, and censorship. He compares the 'positive process' with the 'negative' of the image as something we can read as the conscious and unconscious parts, writing: "The first stage of the photograph is the 'negative' [négatif]; every photographic picture has to pass through the 'negative process,' and some of these negatives which have held good in examination are admitted to the 'positive process' ending in the picture" (ibid.: 220). While Derrida's quote might infer that the process of developing the image 'reveals' the unconscious, we might also refer to the positive 'conscious' process that happens before the camera, and the image that falls upon the sensor or film in the *camera obscura* is what occurs within its unconscious counterpart. However, the unconscious part only 'comes to light' when the image is produced.

However, Bate (2004: 87) infers that the operation of this process of generating 'automatic images' was not necessarily to 'unveil' the unconscious mind of the artist. Rather, the surrealists introduced and exhibited psychical 'dramas' translated into material form for public scrutiny. Indeed, if it is the automaticity of the camera that is integral to this process, then it is the camera itself that is able to expose the unconscious through its ability to make it publicly visible in a more material form. On a similar note, he also mentions that everyday language, puns, metaphors and so on function through 'slippages of language' in the same way the rhetoric of the surrealist 'automatic' image enunciates a disruptive flow into the common unconscious³¹. In this sense, we can see the 'photographic speech act' acting as a disruption in the way it appears to be both still and moving, pulling a common understanding of linear temporality in

³⁰ Derrida cites the Freudian metaphor of human memory, which he says procures durable traces at the same time as it receives new imprints, and that it is imperfect whenever it is no longer limited. However, the camera, in this instance, is described by Derrida in the same terms as a physical apparatus with a psychic analogy.

³¹ Lacan (2002 [1966]: 412-455) also uses the terminology of the 'dream image' to mean 'a signifier without signified', just as the surrealists believed the automatic image was 'designified'. I do not necessarily want to make this assertion, but it gives an idea of the 'free association' we might afford to such images. This note of language is also taken up in the methodology following on pp. 51-53 of this thesis in the form of event scores and linguistic puns as artistic provocations.

different directions. It is, perhaps, in the disruption of the temporal break the automatic image provides that we can access a wider notion of what Derrida refers to as ‘the structural unconscious’: the unknown from which the iterability of every citation is taken.

Armstrong (2012: 705) says there is nothing coincidental about Barthes’ (1977: 142-149) declaration of the death of the author with the rise of contemporary photographic practice and she analyses how aspects of automatism inform agency in photography as the means to identify where photography exists on a spectrum between authorial intent and accident. She says the photograph “distills the encounter between chance and decision... it illustrates the idea of the chance convergences that the camera can catch, in the instant that is different from what came before and what came after and that will never be the same again” (ibid.: 710). The polarisation between agency and automatism is somewhat a ‘red herring’ as “the flow of time in the world provides the raw material, the artist’s agency shapes it” (ibid: 723). Within this context we can understand how performance and photography strike such a relationship: performance works inside a linear flow of time and the image operates outside it. In general terms, film operates in a ‘linear’ manner, unfolding with the flow of time and painting does not have the aspect of instantaneity as performance nor is it mediated by the apparatus of the camera. Because of their unique and respective temporalities, performance ‘tests’ photography’s ability to capture its transience, just as photography tests performance’s potential to exist beyond the moment.

Accepting that repetition of a performance produces different results every time it is performed, then the camera’s automatism can distil it into one moment that is not the will or intention of the artist in order to reveal something of the unconscious iteration of the performance. Timing is key: an operator³² may be trained ‘when’ to push the button or how to ‘frame’ the image, but there may be consensus that the best photographs happen as a coincidence of chance and intention. The artist not only has agency to shape the circumstances of the photograph through an intended act of performance but also in the editing and selection of the ‘moment’. The same is true of automatic writing: it ‘generates’ material through an intentional act to write ‘automatically’ but the final piece of literature will often be subject to an extensive edit.

³² Of course, ‘the operator’ is discussed (for example, Barthes (2000 [1980]: 10). Similarly, Flusser (2006 [1983]: 60) describes the ‘photographer’ as “a person who tries to make photographs with information not contained in the camera program”. This is about ‘where’ we place the photographer in the work. I would suggest to clarify the two terms in that if the person working the camera has an artistic or aesthetic stake in how the work looks, they are the ‘photographer’, but if they are merely a human control for the mechanics of the camera under the artistic direction of someone else, they can be considered the camera ‘operator’.

The idea of automatism suggests photography becomes a medium through which performance can be seen and experienced outside of the body, both in the act of performing and the act of spectatorship. The optical unconscious also allows us to focus on the details of a singular moment³³ rather than assimilate the totality of a full duration of a live performance or piece of film. Performance then becomes an intentional act and photography is the medium through which the chance element of automatism is conveyed. The resulting photograph highlights rather than negates this element of unrepeatability³⁴. By its nature, playing with the two different temporal registers and performance's 'plunge' into the unconscious³⁵, the performance exceeds its own act and reveals how it points towards a wider collective citation. This citation is what I suppose creates 'performativity' in the still image.

This cannot be assessed from within: it is only evident as an ingrained unconscious iteration that precedes and exceeds the performance. Therefore, both the performer and the spectator are not able to see *what it 'does'* until it becomes a still image, as the *différance* between temporalities and bodies, both self and other, then and there, here and now, affords us the opportunity to reassess the act as a singular repetitious gesture through the lens of the optical unconscious. We can then surmise there is what the performer/subject 'knows' (the performance act), what the camera knows (the automatic point at which the image is taken) and what the image knows (revealing the unconscious citation). The automatism of the camera creating the image is one of the only ways the performer can access the unconscious citations of that gesture, allowing them to refine and edit the results of this automatic process further either to generate more material or to select images for potential display, dissemination and exhibition.

³³ We could also read this as similar to Cartier-Bresson's (1952) concept of "the decisive moment".

³⁴ To some extent, Krauss (1994) also tries to address the idea of how these modernist concepts of automatism that appear 'as if by accident' were, in fact, a combination of ideas and techniques that lead to the production of the work. Similarly, there is a balance between technique, concept and chance here. She also suggest that Benjamin's optical could be a 'political' unconscious.

³⁵ This is a paraphrased reference to Phelan (1993: 146), who suggests that the disappearance of the live act is a plunge into the unconscious. I am assuming that the photograph reveals some of this unconscious nature.

Performance and theatricality

Auslander (2006) distinguishes between the 'theatrical' and the 'documentary' image and, in this sense, we may perceive 'theatricality as a medium' and 'performance as a vehicle' to demonstrate performativity in the photographic image. I want to suggest performance is used as a citational practice rather than a 'method of staging narrative'. In the former, it is recognised that performance calls upon citations to become performative, whereas the latter relies on a fictional or literary device to be 'performance-like'. It could be argued both methods are 'performative' in their respective ways, but I believe the purpose of performance to camera is not to 'stage narratives'. In order for performativity to be analysed, I perceive these acts to be 'staged demonstrations, iterations or citations' embedded within the photograph as 'utterance'.

Photography's inherent theatricality has been evident since its origins, when Hippolyte Bayard first posed in protest at the endorsement of the Daguerrotype in his work, *Self-Portrait As A Drowned Man* (1839)³⁶. We might say that because of this relationship the presence of a camera invokes 'performance' from the human subject. Traditionally, we 'smile' for the camera – in itself a miniature performance to be conveyed when the photograph is viewed. But not every photograph is a staged tableau, just as not every photograph is accidental. It is easy to assume photographic documentation is 'a passive act' where the camera merely 'takes in' what is happening in front of it.



Figure 1.4 – Portrait of the Artist As A Drowned Man, Hippolyte Bayard (1839)

However, Bieszczad-Roley (2011: 7) remarks on the conscious relationship between photographer and performer and how both parties are 'making decisions' and 'performing

³⁶ (Pauli, 2006: 13-15) refers to this in the introduction of *Acting the Part: Photography As Theatre*, positing Bayard as an actor, storyteller and photographer.

actions' specifically for the camera. Commenting on the act of documenting Butoh dancers, she indicates the performers are aware of the camera, saying in her experience the act of photographing may prompt a certain pose or gesture from the performer. She writes that the "right moment is recognized by the photographer by releasing the camera shutter. On the other hand, the clicking sound of the camera informs others, including the dancer, about the photographer's recognition of the interesting moment."

In employing this awareness, the photographer is given what the subjects perceive the camera wants (or perhaps even what they perceive the image wants). In the concluding remarks of her paper, she acknowledges the limitations of looking at this purely as an act of documenting, or as a process of performing to camera but more the creation of something in-between the dance and the photograph – something she calls for further understanding of. In this respect, we might surmise that *any* photographic practice involving human subjects before the camera (including the vernacular) involves some level of performance where there is an 'in-between' process – the process of performing to camera – where there is relatively little understanding.

However, there is a difference between 'photography as theatre' (e.g. employing conventions of theatre to be realised as dramatic and entertaining in the still image) and 'photography as theatrical' (the inherent 'theatricality' of the photograph that has come to be associated with it through acts of posing, gesture and so forth). We may employ theatre terms in photographic composition, such as tableau or 'mise-en-scene', but photographs are not all acknowledged to be a result of the historic tradition of 'theatre'.

Though Fried (1998: 17, 164) disparages theatricality and its presence in artwork as somewhat soporific and encourages passivity in the spectator, stating such theatrical works 'project' their presence onto the viewer and anticipates the role of cinema in contemporary practice. Taylor (2003: 6) dismisses this notion, suggesting the constructedness of performance signals its artificiality to reveal an antitheatrical prejudice that in more complex readings recognises the constructed as coterminous with the real. She states that it is possible for performance to be 'real' in whatever terms it is understood by. This is confluent with Ranciere's (2009a: 87) notion that drama is *necessary* in imagery if there is to be any action³⁷ (e.g. provocation occurring in

³⁷ See the chapter *The Intolerable Image* in which he declares: "Thus, we need images of action, images of the true reality or images that can immediately be inverted into their true reality, in order to show us that the mere fact of being a spectator, the mere fact of viewing images, is a bad thing. Action is presented as the only answer to the evil of the image and the guilt of the spectator" (pp. 87). Rather than

reality that is confluent with the notion of 'performative imagery'). I suggest Fried is responding to the 'passive immersion' and suspension of disbelief that is more akin to a style of mimetic realism not manifest in any artwork described as 'performative'³⁸.

Henry (2006: 113) additionally counters this negative view of theatricality by describing the gesture in postmodern photography that "knows itself to be appearance" as a self-reflexive 'mirror' revealing the nature of contemporary representation and that theatricality has historically [and perhaps wrongly] earned itself a bad name. She admits that while early-twenty-first century photography 'makes no effort' to deny the spectator constructed fictions, what underlies this is an invitation for the viewer to "participate in an imaginative engagement with representation itself and with the state of affairs in general" (ibid.: 154). In turn, she illustrates that the blurring between theatricality and photography is not caused by the fictions it creates *per se* but the way it can visually create situations and scenarios through which the spectator can identify contemporary culture and his/her relationship to it.

Tormey (2013: 114) writes that the conflicting nature of realism and the expectations of the photograph can be satisfied by a semblance of narrative on behalf of the spectator. Referring to the photographic image, she states: "The desire for semblance of real events can be satisfied by fiction; that the desire for narrative is animated by the desire to disrupt it; that the construction of meaning emerges from material presence and conceptual absence; that whilst the photograph cannot escape resemblance, its resemblance to the actual world can construct a world of fiction".

Using an example from theatre, Schechner (1985: 111) maps out this conundrum when he speaks of Olivier being interrupted in the middle of 'To be or not to be' to be asked, "Whose words are those? And if he were interrupted, what could his reply be?"

The words equally belong and don't belong to Shakespeare, Hamlet and Olivier. Just as equally, we might question the origin of the performed nature of citation in 'calling upon' its unknown origins. To whom does the citation belong? The artist, the spectator or the originator? It is all and none at the same time, drawing an indistinct boundary between its 'faithful',

being 'immersive' and 'soporific' images require theatricality, or 'drama' in his terms, to provoke the spectator to take action.

³⁸ In that it is meant to provoke action rather than be soporific or passive.

‘authentic’ and ‘fictional’ status, the status of the way in which it is performed and the status of the underlying circumstances of the photograph. Who gets to make the ‘judgement call’ on the ‘authenticity’ of a performance? It is perhaps everyone and no-one simultaneously. All the medium of performance can do is pose possibilities, and herein lies its impact. As Lüttecken (2010: 130) writes, "We live in a culture of performance, and this 'performance' is as ambiguous as Rosenberg's "acting", standing both for one's quasi-dramatic self-performance and one's economic achievement – and increasingly, the former is essential to the latter... To act is to step beyond the now; to perform is to extend the now, to prolong the present. But this need not be a static opposition. What is a failed performance if not an act, whether intentional or not?"

Lüttecken positions all acts that ‘extend the now’ as performance, whether we deem them ‘good’ or ‘bad’ acts, faithful or unfaithful to citation. However, it is not the relationship between ‘fiction’ and ‘nonfiction’ that is at stake here. To clarify we can refer back to Austin who, in his essay *Pretending* (1979: 261-262), posits that sometimes ‘pretending’ to do something can involve actually or really doing it. The example he uses is of an officer attempting to behave in an ‘undercover’ manner on a stakeout might pass the time by pretending to read a newspaper, which would involve actually reading the paper. Similarly, we might say that Franko B bleeds as a ‘performance’ but it involves cutting himself in reality. Clearly, the distinction is not between ‘real circumstances’ and ‘illusion’, but more to do with ‘seriousness’, the level of artistic intention behind the act and what lies beyond it than whether it is considered to be a ‘performed’ act³⁹. Within these two binaries lies a large spectrum of approaches and the authentication of what counts as ‘performed’ and ‘unperformed’ is indistinct.

Therefore, an artist engaged with performance to camera does not necessarily use the ambiguity of the photographic medium as a device to deceive the spectator. Nor is it solely meant to evoke a fictitious narrative. Though the actions are performed, in each case it does not discount the fact that there was a ‘doing’ before the camera that actually occurred to express the performative utterance. Nor does it negate that behind these theatrical actions there is an intention to engage the spectator in wider social, political and cultural provocations. What I am

³⁹ Drawing distinctions between ‘performed’ and ‘unperformed’ behaviour is problematic and has been contested by the likes of Read (1995). He argues that many aspects of our everyday lives are, in fact, performed behaviours or arise from a theatrical tradition. Stating a difference between ‘performed’ and ‘unperformed’ suggests there is an ‘original’ behaviour (or performative act) that we can cite or repeat, but both Derrida and Butler have concluded finding this origin would be impossible. The wider point is that, performed or not, it is *intention* – not ‘authentication’ or objective approval – that validates the act.

attempting to illustrate here is that performance to camera does not necessarily mean 'staged scenario to produce narrative', more a 'staged action to produce provocation'.

There are numerous existing sources we could draw on to justify this 'mode' of performance. For example, the Brechtian notion of 'verfremdungseffekt' (Brecht, 1964: 91) and his idea of 'distancing' to separate this 'performative' practice from 'theatre', in that Brecht's view of the theatre of realism veiled the possibility of social and political action. Brecht sought to make the audience reflect critically upon what was seen and the framework of performativity in performance to camera suggests exactly that. In this way, performance functions as a method of 'demonstration' or 'self-staging' where the performers are 'demonstrating' the performative act as a point of provocation for the spectator, rather than to make them willingly suspend disbelief. In any event, there are a variety of approaches that illustrate performed actions are not a simply binary of illusion and pretence, but a wide spectrum of approaches that cannot simply be divided into 'performed' and 'unperformed'. I suggest that the performed action in the still image is a way of 'showing' as opposed to 'telling' how these performatives, or citations, have become embedded in cultural memory⁴⁰, inviting the audience to make up their own mind.

This is congruent with Benjamin's (1977) thoughts on Epic Theatre and his reading of 'citation', in that 'cite' does not simply mean 'to quote' and is even more resonant with the German '*zitieren*', which carries with it etymological resonances with its Latin root *citare*, meaning 'to set in motion'. 'Citation' then becomes an indicative *performed* gesture that 'sets in motion' the dialogue between time, space, performer and spectator, performance and photograph. Benjamin referring to 'interruption' makes this important conclusion: "gestures are obtained all the more when someone engaged in an action is interrupted" (ibid: 521).

⁴⁰ Equally, we could echo Artaud (1970: 36-49) and his rejection of performance as the illusion or imitation of life; that stylised modes of performance can be striking and meaningful because they are not given over to narrative or consumed in producing images of a world that is 'forever elsewhere'. We could also call on Kaprow (1993: 16) who sets 'the happening' as a mode of performance that could not be set over and against 'reality' as its portrayal or representation: what it offers is 'the certainty of a number of occurrences to which we are more than normally attentive'. What I am attempting to illustrate is the existence of a variety of approaches that describe performance as functioning outside of the realm of 'fiction' or 'illusion' and, if we see performance as a performative practice, then what we are doing is the reverse of illusion. By 'performing' a situation or action that would not normally occur without the artist's intentional action, then we are calling attention to the performed nature of citations and using performance as a method of breaking the illusions of normativity to reveal their underlying pretense so that the spectator can consider the citation in the process of enactment.

Samuel Weber (2004) advances this idea of interruption to convey the impact of theatricality proliferating in the new media landscape as a dynamic connection between representation and audience (2004: 1). Stating that the liminal 'break' between 'theatricality' and its audience is and has always been present; now the 'commercial break' replaces the orchestra pit – the break in physical space – between images of theatricality. "The not-so subliminal message is that to survive the coming breaks it may be prudent not to question their totalising, framing function... The more catastrophic the message the better, as long as it fills the "break" that separates viewers of the broadcast media today and enables them to "survive" the spectacles they behold" (ibid.: 53).

We may then see theatricality embodied in the still image as a 'photographic break'. This is, however, a break in time and space. Spectators are conveyed the drama of the 'intolerable image' as Ranciere describes but only just enough before the gesture 'breaks' with the movement of physical space, allowing for 'a tension between anticipation and reflection' (Weber, 2004: 53) providing space to allow the spectator to 'survive' the injury of the *punctum* to be healed via the *studium*. The camera itself has the power to frame the 'totality' of the work through the refraction of the lens but – in recognising the photographic break – it becomes a device through which the still image can carry 'theatricality': a statement that may be questioned. This in turn provides the reflexivity required for performativity: for the gesture or citation to be considered within a wider cultural framework.

Therefore, the idea of 'performance' is read in relation to performativity as an intentionally performed act favouring instruction, repetition or citation that happens 'in time' rather than an act intended to be witnessed in a sculptural or painterly tradition of 'posed stillness' (e.g. through the use of tableau or meticulously staged portraiture). Fried's recent work (2008: 35, 50, 59, 91) perhaps explains this view more clearly when he shifts his usage to the term of 'picture'. Though he emphasises his views on art soliciting its viewers in a theatrical manner have not shifted in substance over the years, his preferred term becomes more generic, encompassing a range of pictorial arts. He thereby disavows in advance any strong (or narrow) conception of medium specificity. As a result, we might understand these 'pictures' existing in any medium and what Fried disparages is a notion of theatrical pictorialism and what I propose demarcates the specificity of the theatrical in photography is not pictorialism, but temporality.

Temporality, durationality or instantaneity of 'actually doing' or 'actually performing' is a key feature. That is to say if we are interested in the 'performance' element of photography and the notion of *différance*, then we are using performance as a means to challenge the temporal pull of the photograph that comes to be present in the image as an intentional 'trace'. This is captured in moments of motion, suspended fluids and the creation of 'one-off' ephemeral leftovers that could not exist again in exactly the same format, even if the instruction or action was repeated. In this sense, these images function both as documentation and artefact, though they oscillate between the two.

The definitions provided here are an acknowledgement that images specifically staged for camera could be considered 'theatrical' in their execution. The use of that theatricality is not always intended to be perceived as 'dramatic metaphor' and neither are they intended to be 'fictitious pictorial narratives' created for camera, though it is acknowledged that 'narrative' may happen in the spectator's individual enactment of the photograph. Rather, these acts are meant to be viewed as staged actions that call upon the practice of citationality as a way to disrupt, deconstruct and analyse performative utterances generated through performance. Then, consequently, how the performance 'does' in its sustained form in the still image rather than as a passing moment, with the notion of temporality as an integral element of the images. That is why the term 'performance' has been employed over the term 'theatre' (or any related term) in order to convey that these acts are 'intentionally acted' and can be viewed both literally and metaphorically. Though narrative may arise from the spectator, it is not the primary motive for the creation of the images nor is it the way they are discussed. Rather, I look to the wider cultural referentiality of the image.

Performative imagery, performative photography: what can images 'do'?

The notion of considering how images might 'do' things has been broached by other theorists. Direct comparisons to speech-act theory and photography have been made, particularly by Ash (2005: 509) who uses the Barnardo's Children campaign as a way to illustrate how photographs act as a call to action, especially in response to human suffering. Displaying babies in abject conditions – a newborn baby's mouth filled with a dirty syringe, live cockroaches or depicted with a bottle methylated spirits – Ash describes how the viewer is 'shamed' into doing something, issuing a not-so subtle appeal for donations. She explains that, "[P]hotographs such

as ‘Heroin Baby’ deploy the implicit challenge: ‘I dare you’ (to help), backed up with the contingent, ‘Shame on you’ (for refusing).”

Ash also touches on the problematic issue of performative misfires or ‘etiolations’: where the performative statement is misinterpreted, incorrectly received or elicits the wrong reaction to its statement. In this case, the Barnardo’s Babies did not elicit the sympathetic response from the public at large, but instead disgust and complaints that led to it being removed.



Figure 1.5 – The Barnardo’s Babies campaign (1999-2000)

Returning to Austin, one can only consider the etiolation with the illocutionary force⁴¹ made. For example, if the statement ‘I now pronounce you man and wife’ is said by someone who has no legal authority with which to make this utterance, the illocutionary force is not there, therefore the performative misfires and there is no legally recognised marriage.

In this instance, because the images were fabricated and deemed not to be representations of the suffering these babies may or may not endure in later life, instead of shame the response was that of outrage. It lacked the illocutionary force necessary to provoke the audience into

⁴¹ Asking a question is an example of what Austin called an illocutionary act. Other examples would be making an assertion, giving an order, and promising to do something. To perform an illocutionary act is to use a locution with a certain force. It is an act performed in saying something, in contrast with a locution, the act of saying something. This is explored in depth in Searle and Vanderveken (1985).

following through with the desired action.

Bringing the concept of a 'misfire' into the performativity mix raises its own problems, most notably suggesting that there can be only one kind of response or reaction to the photographic image. It does not account for subjective interpretation and the interplay between intention, audience and its subsequent interpretation. When it is paired with the concept of the illocutionary force, though, we may see that the artist who constructs the photographic image can invoke the interplay between perceived performative statement and the illocutionary force with which that statement is made.

We might understand how images 'do' in themselves if we think of road signs or pictograms due to their instructional and cultural universality. It is a jump, yet somewhat easier, in the context of war photography or photojournalism to see images as provocations that empower people to act. However, in the context of art photography or performance to camera, this could be more questionable and fluid. To illustrate how we might see practices from performance to camera as being performative in this sense of doing, I will start with an example from documentary photography and transition to an example from performance to camera to clarify.



Figure 1.6 – *The vulture and the little girl* (1993) © Kevin Carter

If we think of Kevin Carter's Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph of a vulture sitting next to a starving African child, we realise it may be 'too late' for that particular child. Nonetheless, it gives the impression underlying the circumstances of the photograph that represent a suffering experienced not just by the child in the photograph but many African citizens. The viewer is called upon to consider much more seriously the real-life consequences of what is beyond the

frame to then assimilate the response and act accordingly.



Figure 1.7 – *Mimic*, Jeff Wall (1982) © Jeff Wall

However, the underlying circumstances of the photography do not have to have occurred ‘under live circumstances’ in order to convey this provocative force. In Jeff Wall’s *Mimic* (1982), he portrays a man making a racist ‘slanty eye’ gesture towards an Asian man passing in the street. This photograph was constructed using models, but the implications remain the same whether or not it was a real event occurring on the street or a staged photograph. Wall invites us not only to consider the gesture the man in the photograph is making but the wider attitudes prevalent in society towards minorities and how we govern our own behaviour towards these actions, asking us to take responsibility for the actions of ourselves and others in response to society’s perceived norms.

This is, of course, a very direct social comparison, but we can look more widely at the social and political function of art, and the ‘performative function’ of photography. We might describe performativity in photography as ‘having agency’ or ‘being agentic’ in the way described by Gell (1998). Gell implicitly refers to the performative quality of art by stating it “utter[s] language in graphemic form”. He also makes reference to an ‘action over semiotic’ approach to art, stating agency is “pre-occupied with the practical mediatory role of art objects in the social process, rather than with the interpretation of objects ‘as if’ they were texts (ibid.: 6-7)”. That is to say if we read performativity as being synonymous or working in conjunction with agency, then it is

concerned with social and cultural relations over 'readings' of the image⁴²; with citations over narratives.

Azoulay (2008) explains this power of the photograph to make us consider the wider political or social implications of what is happening beyond the frame in the opening chapters of her book *The Civil Contract Of Photography*. Explicitly stating that performativity and speech acts are an essential part of this process, she uses war photography as an example to illustrate how this occurs, stating: "Photographs are constructed like statements (énoncés), the photographic image gains its meaning through mutual (mis)recognition ... Citizenship likewise is gained through recognition" (Azoulay, 2008: 25).

Azoulay says that photographs go beyond a mere empathic response, setting up a civil contract between the spectator and the 'nonphotographed' citizens that calls on the spectator to restore the citizenship denied to those within the frame. In this sense, she contends, "A photograph is an énoncé within the pragmatics of obligation" (ibid.:25).

Using the example of photographs of the atrocities that happened in Abu Ghraib to illustrate this we recognise a difference exists between the 'citizen' and the 'noncitizen', Azoulay proposes we are called upon to address the difference, to 'witness' the atrocity, to make a contract with the photograph. The photograph then exceeds the status of testimony or evidence by calling for action on the part of the viewer. Azoulay insists that the meaning of photography inheres not in the photograph itself as autonomous object but rather in the performative reconstruction of the photograph as "event" by its spectator.

⁴² This is analogous with Bourriard (2002: 113) who suggests this spectatorial and artistic participation in art is inherent to the political and social discourse with the art object and that 'relational art' is "a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space". This is read in equal measure with Gere and Corris's (2008: 21) concept of 'non-relational aesthetics' as they believe "art cannot, in any explicit or useful sense, be political, at least without ceasing to be art... The best art can do is continually bring to our attention the contingency of every form of community in the light of our separateness and singularity [in order to] help us imagine what it must be to remain open and hospitable to the Other, by confronting us with its own singularity". In this way, art's political function is one of 'calling attention' to certain discourses with the hope of accommodating the otherness the work addresses as an aspirational horizon we continue to head towards.



Figure 1.8 – An example of the photographs taken of the abuse at Abu Ghraib

Importing a sense of the live into our encounter with photography, she makes this proposal:

When the assumption is that not only were the photographed people there, but that, in addition, they are still present there at the time I'm watching them, my viewing of these photographs is less susceptible to becoming immoral. The civil contract of photography is a spectatorial acknowledgement of a civic duty toward the photographed persons who haven't stopped being 'there'.

(ibid: 16)

In this sense, Azoulay opens up the definitions of when we use the term "still image". Still to mean "that which was once in motion" and "still" to mean that which is still happening, or still occurring in the now it is viewed. The image is 'still there', 'still present' and in so doing, she reconfigures the ethical relations that govern photography re-situating the spectator as intended recipient of the photographic speech act – as its co-temporal addressee.

Moreover, Soutter (2013: 83-84) addresses the issue of performative photography, clearly differentiating between the documentary (which reveals and unmask), the narrative (which dramatises and entertains) and the performative, a way of 'activating' the viewer to provoke an emotive or active response. She writes "photographs could be understood as actions rather than being decoded as meanings" placing the photograph in the realm of the social. Drawing on Butler, she also says the idea of identity as performance that operates from compulsion and

coercion as well as from choice, activates the audience to consider the photographer (or artist) as embedded in maps of social power relationships.

In some respects, this also addresses the issue of why 'performative photography' is read in terms of the statements and citations it points towards, rather than a semiotic analysis of the signs and symbols contained within. Semiotics 'connote and infer' while performatives 'provoke and do' and, while we could argue that semiotics are in themselves citations, we read semiotics in the context of 'signs and signifiers' rather than 'statements and speech acts'.

Performative realism: how performance comes into being through the still image

Borrowing from Azoulay (2012), we might use the concept of civil imagination to explain how the ontology of the photograph arises from the possibilities performance can provoke. In order for change to be possible, citizens have always had to have the ability to imagine a political order that was radically different from the one that was in power at the time. In her example, 18th century French subjects had to be able to envision a life in which the king did not rule to enact the revolution that created the French republic. She therefore states that, though not a physical quality, the photograph is dependent upon imagination in order to access something not available to the immediate senses in order to provoke change:

Imagination enables us to create an image on the basis of something that is not accessible to the senses... However material the images that we produce in our mind's eye might be, they remain disembodied and do not enjoy independent presence in the world except for that presence which is contingent upon our imagination.

(Azoulay, 2012: 4)

She continues by saying that photography holds the same power to initiate the beginnings of change. Applying it to performance to camera, we could say a level of 'staging' is required because the artist is trying to render an alternative idea, or some deconstruction of a citation, into the civil imagination and this will not exist if they do not *make it happen*. In order to instil in the spectator the possibility of a situation or performative changing, then the artist has to 'be the change' and realise it through an intentional act of performance. In this sense, staged acts are

required on the part of the artist to provoke the spectator to move towards the change in their own imagination.

Therefore, though the performance that happens through the photograph is imagined, it does not make it any less powerful. The performative incitement behind the photographic performance is intended to use the mind's eye to envision something beyond the frame. The imagination is the stimulation for change: the performativity of the still image says if one can imagine it happening, then it portrays the effect that it can happen or has already happened, provoking the recipient of the utterance to respond to that possibility.

If we return to the notion that the artist concerned is more interested in documentation rather than documentary, it poses problems around using the terms authenticity and actuality. That would be to say that the artist is primarily concerned with documentation that transcribes a performative effect, rather than documenting the performance as a documentary event with all of its integral elements; so the idea that a performance document has to capture a performance 'exactly as it happened' becomes somewhat less relevant.



Figure 1.9 – *Crying Glasses*, Hayley Newman (1998) © Hayley Newman

An example best used to describe the slippages between documentation and 'the documentary' is Hayley Newman's series *Connotations* (2001). In this, Newman stages a series of works for camera with an accompanying text that describes the performance. However, these texts were in many cases fabrications to supplement the imagery⁴³ and so the photographs shift from

⁴³ Newman writes in *Performancemania* (2001:39) "Connotations are constructed fictional images... Made as a way to understand how the documentary performance image works in relation to text, as well as constructing the context to make work... The document replaces the performance... When supported

'documentation' into performed moments. For example, *Crying Glasses* (figure 1.9) is displayed in exhibition with the accompanying text: "Over a year I wore the crying glasses while travelling on public transport in all the cities I visited. The glasses functioned using a pump system which, hidden inside my jacket allowed me to pump water up out of the glasses and produced a trickle of tears down my cheeks" (as cited in Jalving, 2005: 150).

The circumstances behind the photograph is that these were a normal pair of sunglasses with tears produced by makeup. However, does this negate the power of the imagery or shift them into the realm of fiction? Jalving (2005) motions the term 'performative realism' to describe Newman's work. By mimicking the conventions of live art, she iterates its codes and conventions and therefore its style in the form of 'realism' comes into being. She states:

Through a multilayered act of repetition of certain codes relating to both performance art and its documentation. An iterative process through which her fake documents become reliable – easy to believe in if we were not told they were faked.... [it is] Newman's way of performing realism, of performing reality.

(Jalving, 2005: 154)

However, if we accept that 'performativity' is a mode of representation that does not refer to a world outside itself but rather produces a world in and of itself, then it *presents* rather than represents through its reiterations and recitations⁴⁴. And in its process of becoming, Jalving also argues it becomes something else:

The documentary photograph might also be entrenched in all kinds of second meanings and loose associations... Images that connote. Connote in the sense of referring to other art historical images, but also in the sense of transgressing, in the sense of moving the content of the image out of the image, out in the

by other information such as dates, location, [these images] provide the forensic link to a non-live situation."

⁴⁴ We could see this as being analogous with the argument made on pp. 15 of this thesis where I discuss Von Hantelmann (2010) and Butler (1993), who suggest this idea of 'coming into being' through looping. The point here is to further the argument that the issue of the status of the document in regards to its testimony is blurry from the perspective of the spectator and that Hayley Newman is an example of an artist who has used its complexity as a purposeful tool in her work.

imaginary field between the image and the viewer. A field in which the image is not just an image of the performance, but also something that in itself performs.

(ibid: 174)

Bringing in the term 'performative realism' is useful for several reasons. Because notions of the real are endlessly debated and one might argue how 'real' performance is in the first instance or even how 'real' the world is. In using this vocabulary we are acknowledging that a) realism is a recognised artistic 'style' rather than something that is meant to be considered 'real' (whatever that means) and b) it describes the 'process of becoming' that performativity infers: that through its iterations the photograph 'comes into being' as performance.

If we recognise it 'as performance' and as a performance that utters the performative, we are recognising the statement it cites and actualises rather than the grounding of that statement. Thus, performative realism describes how, through its rehearsals, the photograph can be given the power to become 'as if it were real' (or could be at some future point) for the spectator.

Additionally, we have to consider the 'power' we are lending the image itself. To accuse images of 'lying' or 'being truthful' recognises their underlying performative power to utter and produce utterances – to 'speak' to us. This is what W.J.T. Mitchell (2005) describes when he states that pictures do not want to be reduced to language, but to have equivalent status to language – to occupy multiple spaces, identities and positions. Going further he states that images may not be as 'strong' and 'powerful' as we accredit them, saying:

Images are certainly not powerless, but they may be a lot weaker than we think...
If the power of images is like the power of the weak, that may be why their desire is so correspondingly strong: to make up for their actual impotence. We as critics may want pictures to be stronger than they actually are in order to give ourselves a sense of power in opposing [them].

(Mitchell, 2005: 32-33)

Therefore, if one of the previous criticisms of photographic documentation of live art is its ability to 'myth-make' or 'canonise', then that is a power that performance scholars, spectators and

artists have afforded them. It is not the image, the artist, or the circumstances that authenticate the circumstances of the photograph, it is a way in which we inherently perceive photography. Auslander (2009) later continues this notion as the idea of 'hermeneutic truth' in our approach to such documents:

It is not meaningful to say that performance documentation can mislead, for there is no way of measuring its faithfulness to an originary event. A hermeneutic view of performance documentation sees [it as texts] allowing us to understand experientially both the past and our present as they are disclosed in.

(Auslander, 2009: 95)

Reviewing the link between intention, fiction and reception, it is important to note that in the reception of the image, there is a conflict – or perhaps a conference – of desires meeting in the space it is viewed. Firstly, there is that of the intention of the artist, who transcribes the performance act into a photographic image to be viewed as a 'performative utterance'. Secondly, there is what W.J.T. Mitchell calls the 'desire' of the image. He explains that pictures *need* a medium (in this case, the photograph) and they *demand* to be seen. Their desire arises in the space between the two, but the longing of the image is what makes it vulnerable and weak. The performing of the utterance and encoding it within the photograph does not have enough power on its own; it is the image's absences and desires that give it power and allure for the spectator. This is an opportune space for the artist as when responding to what pictures want, they occupy, embed and take over the space in which the picture creates its complexity and identity. The artist gives the image its own life and fulfils one of its desires. The other desire is to be seen and only the last corner of the triad, or the spectator, can fulfil this.

Recognising that the artist may construct with intention, the spectator inevitably 'reads' the image in accordance with his or her own experience and the artist cannot anticipate the resulting interpretation. This has parallels with the Barthesian *punctum* and *studium*: whatever the intention of the photographer or artist, it can almost never be predicted or planned what will pierce the spectator or how it is rendered in terms of experience. However, it is guided by artistic intention wherever that lies across the multiple points in the process of making and receiving.

In summary, the artist responds to the image's need to exist through the intention to create work and the spectator responds to its demand to be seen. Both the artist and the spectator are victim to the image's desire. The artist fills the picture's desire to have identity, personality and position by putting something of him or herself into it (this could range from a hallmark style or expression to a literal self-portrait). The 'medium' of photography takes on its most supernatural sense, using it as a method of divination to manifest the artist's intention as the image's 'life'⁴⁵. Simultaneously, the spectator responds to the 'lack' of power in the image, evidenced as the desire for its ambiguity to be filled upon being viewed. The spectator lends the image authority and dismisses the ambiguity by empowering it with his or her own interpretation, rendering it the image the spectator wants it to be.

If previously photography has been seen to be problematic because of what it does not reveal, it is full of 'lacunae' or the underlying circumstances of the photograph are in question; this is not then so much a problem with the medium of photography, rather it is the inherent way in which we now perceive it. Because of its temporal connection to something that 'could have been' or 'has already been' while simultaneously performance to camera can posit the possibility of 'what could be' or 'what might happen', the spectator desires further narrative to be rendered to the image and the artist knowingly exploits this when using the photographic medium, reading the citations as a way of rehearsing its iterations so that it comes into being as possibility. Put simply, the artist recognises the power of photography and wields it in order to seduce the spectator into affording it a consensus of belief or 'performative realism'.

Moving into methodology: temporality versus 'image-making'

The slippery nature of this performative realism and its general blurriness in the field has been evidenced recently in the Tate Modern's *Performing for Camera* (2015) exhibition, where documentation of performance events, such as Shunk-Kender's photographs of Yves Klein's *Anthropomorphies* (1960) events, were hung together with Erwin Wurm's *One Minute Sculptures* (1997). My argument is that the confusion arises because, previously, assumptions may have been based on photography turning time-based performance practices into images, akin to sculpture or painting (for example, Krauss (1979) suggests photography could reside in

⁴⁵ There are parallels with Derrida's (1994) idea of hauntology in which he suggests 'specters' arrive from the past and appear in the present and the idea of a return from death fractures all traditional conceptions of temporality. The temporality to which the ghost is subject is therefore paradoxical, as at once they 'return' and make their debut.

the expanded field of sculpture). However, what is at stake is the intentional switch in temporal registers that make a particular practice of performance to camera both 'documents of' performance and a form of 'performance documentation'. Using automatism as a method of transcribing performance situates the resulting photograph both as a document and as a standalone artefact. In the following passage, I will attempt to demonstrate where this idea resides in a number of current practices.

'Self-portraiture' has been a common mode of investigation for performance to camera, which arguably can give the artist more control over the output. Perhaps this is why Amelia Jones (2002) describes it as a 'technology of embodiment'. Explaining that by performing an exaggerated version of self, the artist positions themselves as an unrecognisable, detached 'other' and uses Derrida's (1988: 1-15) idea of 'the eternal return'⁴⁶ to suggest this is a form of deference by passing into another form (in this case, from performance to photograph)⁴⁷, 'embodying' themselves in the medium⁴⁸. Cindy Sherman, Claude Cahun and Hannah Wilke are all cited as examples within the text and Jones infers that this is a predominantly feminist discourse. We can see traces of this in the work of Jo Spence and, latterly, Catherine Opie's series of self-portraits.

⁴⁶ Jones cites Derrida, but the term originates from Eliade (1971: 23), as that which he describes as "imitating the exemplary acts of a god or of a mythical hero, or simply by recounting their adventures, the man of an archaic society detaches himself from profane time and magically re-enters the Great Time, the sacred time." An example of this is how, cross-culturally, Mesopotamians, Egyptians, and other Near Eastern peoples re-enacted cosmogonic myths like New Year as the need for a beginning to return. This suggests the cross-cultural significance of some events, such as the celebration of a 'New Year', marks mankind's universal desire to return to beginnings.

⁴⁷ We could further Jones's proposition by employing the Foucaultian discourse of 'technologies of the self' (cited in Foucault (1988: 9-15), in that the exploration of our own self can embody both the powers and resistances at play in society and culture as a whole. He poses this as three questions: "(1) What are the relations we have to truth through scientific knowledge, to those "truth games" which are so important in civilization and in which we are both subject and objects? (2) What are the relationships we have to others through those strange strategies and power relationships? And (3) what are the relationships between truth, power, and self?"

⁴⁸ The idea of such embodiment is a historical phenomenon in fine art photography practices with connections to early surrealism, seen in the work of Vertov's *Kino-Eye* (1926), Man Ray's *Self-Portrait With a Gun* (1932) and Claude Cahun's *What Do You Want From Me* (1928).



Figure 1.10 – Self Portrait Cutting Detail, Catherine Opie (1993)

But perhaps it is the ‘embodiment’ present in these photographic self-portraits that activates something of their phenomenological presence. Philip Crowther (2009) discusses the unique and detached viewpoint that photography can give and how that perspective gives it life beyond mere documentation. He says:

To see oneself from a position which is unavailable in one's immediate perception of oneself can be an exhilarating and liberating experience. And whilst the photograph in its basic form offers only a single 'atomised' perspective on the real, its very singularity can illuminate and act as a focal point for unconventional understanding as well as for mundane visual documentation. Its ontological detachment can, in other words, in some contexts energise its interpretative potential.

(Crowther, 2009: 149)

This helps to explain why self-portraiture holds such fascination with artists working in this area. Not only does it offer distance from the self as this performed other but in addition it expands ways of viewing self and other to the spectator – this ‘relatable’ aspect that enables the spectator to open up their point of view to ‘otherness’. Seeing ‘self-as-other’ moves the photographic image from ‘self-portrait’ to ‘self as demonstrator’.

We can look at these practices engaging with self-portraiture as being ‘performative’ in the way they ‘perform identity’ and thus engage in the tradition of Butler et al as performativity being locked into the idea of performances of gender and challenging these social constructs. Self-portraiture does not exert itself as temporal and often reverts back to the fine art tradition of pictorialism. We might see these images as echoes of a sculptural or painterly tradition of

portraiture without engaging with the ephemeral nature of performance: that is to say to include an element that is unpredictable or unrepeatable that is more aligned with the ethos of 'live art'. However, looking at self-portraiture within the framework of automatism what Crowther and Jones are describing is how self-portraiture affords the artist the chance to see how an intended performance act takes a plunge into the unconscious and illustrates what the performance act becomes when it is a performative utterance in the still image.



Figure 1.11 – Risk Assessment, Sian Bonnell (2007) © Sian Bonnell

The idea of artwork existing 'in time' as well as in form is more present in Fluxus, post-Fluxus and conceptualist work, where art is seen as happening now as well as a piece in itself. The power of performative statements both within the image and its accompanying caption text have been used to full effect in the work of practitioners like Bruce Nauman. In *Self-Portrait of the Artist As A Fountain* (1966), Nauman embodies comedic language and pictures figures of speech to absurd effect, calling attention to how language can shape perception and guide meaning. This tactic is regularly employed by Duane Michals, for instance in his *I Build A Pyramid* (1978) sequence, but is also recently utilised by Sian Bonnell. In her *Risk Assessment* series (2007), she employs risk assessment to literal, extreme and absurdist effect for a variety of household chores.

Isabel Wenzel also interplays with body, stasis, sculpture and photography. Giving herself ten

seconds, the standard time on the self-timer of a camera, to strike a pose, Wenzel uses her former dance training to manipulate and contort her body into different shapes.



Figure 1.12 – Model 3, Isabel Wenzel (2014) © Isabel Wenzel

Wenzel's clever suspension of time, action and body produces a 'still' photographic image, but 'still' in the previously discussed sense of 'once moving' and 'still present'. She also plays with a core ethos of 'uniqueness' both of the live moment and of the photographic moment, culminating in a sculptural presence.

One of the most recognised practitioners working with live art and photography in the UK is Manuel Vason⁴⁹. Typically working as a 'collaborator' with various performance artists, he titled his last book *Double Exposures: Performance As Photography, Photography As Performance* (2014), setting out the intention for his work to be viewed 'as performance' and that the photograph can be performance. I have already outlined how, in academic terms, we view the photograph as embodying a similar temporal space as performance. But can we describe this work as 'performative' within the framework?⁵⁰ It is certainly possible, but the question here is

⁴⁹ See for example his photo books referenced in the bibliography (2001, 2007 and 2014)

⁵⁰ At the time of writing, Vason is currently following a PhD by publication at University of Creative Arts Farnham, UK. He may well define it in these terms, or his own. It will be interesting for the reader to look for this publication if they are seeing this thesis post-2019 (the anticipated publication date for Vason's PhD).

whether the performative provocation is for the image to 'perform' or whether a wider social and cultural doing bears more discussion. The issue of collaboration between photographer and performer can cause confusion as both parties will have their own intention of what they want the image to do. Is the performer or the photographer the 'creator' of the work? If we suppose that 'automatism' is a component of performance and photography, we are interested in the unrepeatable rather than the posed, the unintentional over the intentional. Vason, as photographer, has more control over when to release the shutter and has the 'trained eye' to do so when acting as spectator of the event via the camera's lens.

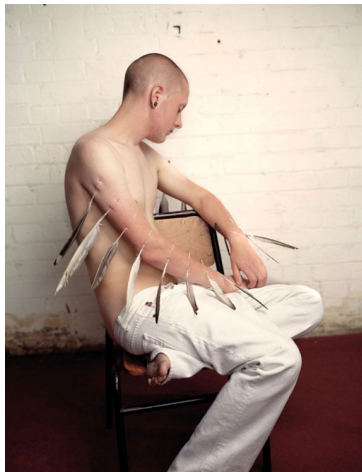


Figure 1.13 – Kris Canavan and Manuel Vason (2007) © M. Vason/ K. Canavan

Vason may recognise that collaboration has its own limitations as *Double Exposures* saw the start of his appearance in front of the lens as the subject and executor of his own performances to camera. This is followed by his next project, *The Photo-Performer* (2017; ONLINE), which engages Vason as the eponymous subject and in his research and development period has started to look at some issues outlined in this thesis, such as the photographic image as intervention (as detailed in chapter two following)⁵¹.

⁵¹ At the time of writing, Vason's project is yet to be fully developed publically so my comment is somewhat limited, but it does show an interesting development in his investigations in performance to camera that the presence of the body of the photographer somehow begins to slip into the frame.



Figure 1.14 – The Photo-Performer, Manuel Vason (2017)

This brief practice review highlights some themes and differences within the field of performance to camera. However, on moving into the methodology, the key idea to take forward is the hypothesis: that an artist uses photography to ‘defer’ their performance because of the *différance* at play in performance’s transcription to photography that deconstructs the act, placing it within the structural unconscious and rendering it ‘performative’ in effect. The hypothesis of how performativity arises in the still image asks to be ‘tested’ and in that respect the methodology in the following chapter explains the practice at work as a series of experiments that look at the hypothesis from three different perspectives: the ‘instantaneous’ image, the audience ‘as witness’ and, lastly, the effect of repetition and performance as a citational practice. Each chapter concludes what this aspect of *différance* ‘does’ in the photograph in order to suggest the ways in which performance exceeds itself and the performer to become performative.

The justification for a practice-based approach recognizes that the tacit knowledge of practice offers the heuristic knowledge of ‘doing’ that can contribute to a body of theory, rather than ‘supposing’ how photography ‘might’ operate through the evaluation of previous artistic work. Cox (2009: 9) states that the act of creation is an intrinsic way of ‘proving’ – testing out objects in the material world, giving them a sense of *QED*. In the same way, the contextual review sets up the literature as ‘that which is to be proven’ and the practice as ‘the act of demonstrating’ in order to evaluate or analyse critical texts and simultaneously producing epistemic outcomes from the findings of that practice.

METHODOLOGY

Introduction: framing the method

As inferred from the contextual review, rather than documenting performances that were primarily meant to be live or using the photograph as a medium for posed tableau, this thesis employs performance and photography as time-based media that play against each other. In order to analyse how this temporal phenomenon affects or invokes performativity, the study is partially pursued in a series of practice-based investigations geared towards the main question of the investigation: what does performance 'do' in the still image? The following methodology explains the historical and practical significance of this mode of research and how it has come to be embedded within the critical frameworks of each of the chapters.

While some of the methodology is inherent in the practice and becomes clear within the exegesis, this account outlines the implicit approaches in a general way, which are then channelled or investigated in different directions in each chapter. By situating the practice part of the research as a series of conceptualist 'experiments' that are discussed akin to a manner of autoethnographic fieldwork, the account offers a view of both the production of practice and a detailed description of how it relates to knowledge creation more generally through its relation to theoretical perspectives. Stemming from a tradition of conceptualism, the methodology explains how the approach is complementary to practice-as-research as an exploratory tool in the arts generally as well as to the investigation of the performativity of performance in photography, due to the 'linguistic turn' and 'score-like' instructional parameters that are used to generate images. Consequently, the photographs produced are discussed through their relationship to critical frameworks.

The images are displayed in the body of the exegesis to compliment and support the related critical context with a descriptive account of making work as an artist and viewing the same work as a spectator. 'Talking through' the image production and reception in this way provides a narrative arc that connects critical theory to practical investigations and, in doing so, the resulting exegesis makes conclusions as to how performativity comes to be embodied visually in the practice of performance to camera. This format aims to more directly link the concepts that drive theory and practice, arriving at the respective conclusions of each chapter through the experience of making work.

Conceptual blending versus the act of doing: outlining method

The choice to use practice as a partial tool to explore the research question stems from the disconnect between theorists discussing work that has already been made and the artists producing the work who have not widely published on their intentions, motivations and ideas behind the pieces. On reading the cornerstones of photographic theory and from the major theorists in the performance documentation arena, it appears that very few of these people are practitioners and, in the history of live art, the photographers behind some of live art's seminal works have been obscured⁵². This means the wealth of literature supposes how these images operate based on photographs that have already been judged to have historical or canonical importance. May (2015: 19-21) proposes why we should not take the method behind these acclaimed theories 'as given' when he talks about 'conceptual blending' (from Gibbs, 2007) in performance studies. The idea behind this concept is that drawing theories from a myriad of sources and presenting them 'as evidence' without testing through practice is deceptive in that it can represent itself as 'empirical theory' when in fact it makes conclusions based on 'inherited' non-empirical propositions. That is to say a further theorist may use a philosophical proposition made by another theorist without it ever having 'been checked' beyond the value of its adherence to academic rigour. He reminds us in the natural sciences that correlation does not equal causation and alternative [and equally valid] hypotheses can be generated and tested by practice, supporting Nelson's (2013) method of 'doing-thinking' fundamental to practice-as-research as a welcome complement to these 'blended' theoretical proposals.

Speculating on the intention behind the creation of live art's historic photographs then becomes a retroactive method of operation since we cannot have insight into the artist's process or

⁵² For example, Barthes, Sontag, Flüsser, Fried, Auslander, Phelan and Jones do/did not make photographic work themselves and so there is a gap in this area of research between hypothesising or philosophising and critically reflecting on the act of making as an embodiment on that knowledge, especially in the field of performance to camera and photographic documentation. Additionally, For example, Maude-Roxby (2007) discusses in her interview with Hans Breder (pp. 55-60) that it was 'hard to track him down' and she states that 'early publications of performance art do not always credit the photographer'. Similarly her book lists Fred W. McDarragh and Robert R. McElroy as the photographers of Carole Schneeman's *Meat Joy* (1964). The practicalities of performance documentation, however, have increasingly urged practitioners to think about material ways of documenting and, if we choose to document, then what qualities are we trying to 'capture' when creating such a document. This is evidenced in collections such as *Shattered Anatomies* (Heathfield, Quick and Templeton: 1997), which gathers alternative performance ephemera as a strategy for documentation, Emilio Greco's *Capturing Intention* (in Lahunta, 2007) and the recent formation of the Documentation Action Research Collective (DARC, 2017: ONLINE). The approach this thesis makes is, rather than to see documentation as secondary or supplementary to performance, to prioritise the making of a document as a creative act.

motivations once the document has been created. Therefore, the theoretical foundation outlined in the contextual review is used as a generative basis for artistic work in order to construct a conceptual model from that practice, rather than utilising existing live or photographic works as the foundation (either my own or other artists'). This means instead of fitting the beginnings of intention onto the creation of the photograph *post factum*, the motivation to create a 'performative' document is clear from the start of the research journey and can be much more closely scrutinised. The photographs created in the period of fieldwork also benefit from having no pre-existing canonical value or preconceived judgemental notions of whether the image in discussion is 'art' or not. By creating works solely in response to the research question, they can be evaluated in direct relation to the enquiry and against the framework of performativity in the still image established in the contextual review.

'Art as experiment'

Because the starting point is a theoretical proposition, the practice naturally followed a heuristic method: that is to say simply a process of trial and error gained most of the results. Framing it within this type of investigation means that we can start with this thesis's proposition as the entry point to creating work: that 'performative' practices in performance to camera are intended to be received in a different temporal space as a photograph and the performativity arises from the *différance* in registers and media. From that point, work can be created and discussed as the 'results' of testing out various hypotheses generated from the findings in situ. Taking an Intentist⁵³ point of view, we may then look at the images with this intention firmly in our minds, discuss how they play with the spatio-temporality of the photographic image and conclude in how they are 'performative' within the framework of the contextual review. The conclusions of each chapter are formed from the 'doing' of practice and how its embodied knowledge may feed into the theoretical canon. That is to say we are constructing a form of experimentation around different variables in order to 'test' how they may be manifested practically and visually.

As one of the first proponents into what would become conceptualism, Duchamp describes his work, *Three Standard Stoppages* (1913-14), in which he dropped three pieces of string one

⁵³ See Pelosi (2009), who believes that the author has been 'reborn' and that the intention of the artist guides the final result. Intentists believe that the 'author' has been reborn in the artistic world and that the artist makes a work with a certain intention. Therefore the resulting artwork must be read in accordance with that intention. In this case the intention is to create photographs that are performative and so the images are discussed in relation to their potential performativity.

metre in length onto three canvases from a distance of one metre in height, as 'canned chance'⁵⁴: a way of controlling parameters in order to produce an artwork that both embodies and embraces the idea of unpredictability while simultaneously (and perhaps ironically) channelling the concept of 'experiment' as it might traditionally be known in scientific terms. Molderings (2010: 143) suggests the genesis of Duchamp's work was reacting against formalist concerns and left a legacy that "was now to be understood as an open experiment aimed at exploring the world of the imaginable, the depictable and the undepictable", in a concept the writer calls 'radical individualism' – an interplay of humour, irony and the serious experimentation of the non-serious.

Schwab (2015: 127) signals that Duchamp's work was a move towards a new epistemology in art, in which "art's point of reference shifts from the present to the future, since it is not the experience of a given material reality that matters but the speculation about the possible future of art that extends our understanding of what art can be and, as a consequence, is". He further supposes that the epistemic value of art should not be subordinate to 'truth'⁵⁵, but instead to realising artefacts beyond materiality. That is to create these experiments to examine the 'knowledge-producing' quality of art means we are speculating on how art might progress by testing its boundaries, while at the same time producing artefacts that 'realise' the knowledge generated by the experiment without making a value judgement on whether they are 'objects of art' or not.

Osbourne (2002: 27) talks about how the use of this experimental method was ushered in by Duchamp and inherited by conceptualism. Describing language as a 'readymade conceptual material', Osbourne suggests conceptualism transformed the essentially negative gesture of Duchamp's 'visual indifference'⁵⁶ into a new linguistically defined positivity. Likewise, it seems that if we are discussing performance as analogous to a form of speech [as a way to 'utter' the citation] and photography as a way of transcribing it, approaching it with the linguistic sensibility of conceptualism appears an apt way of analysing this particular proposition. Taking his cue

⁵⁴ As cited in Molderings (2010), pp. 2

⁵⁵ Schwab's wording, though we could read this as synonymous to 'logic' or 'reason' in this context. What Schwab identifies is that Duchamp was one of the first artists to demonstrate that concepts can have materiality. Schwab also suggests on a wider theme that art has an inferiority complex in academia due to the more scientific or academic rigour of other disciplines and the epistemology of reason, and this kind of epistemology should be rejected if we can consider artistic outcomes to have 'knowledge value'.

⁵⁶ As quoted in Duchamp (1973: 142).

from Duchamp, Joseph Kosuth and his series *Art as Idea as Idea* works (most notably *One and Three Chairs* (1965)) initiated a dialogue between art, language and representation. Kosuth (1969: 916) stated that, "All art (after Duchamp) is conceptual (in nature) because art only exists conceptually." This should not be taken to mean that all art influenced by Duchampian strategies is conceptual, or that other art is some other kind of art. It means that strategies of artistic experimentation do not take on the challenge of framing new propositions about art and as art; rather they explore the circumstances of what Smith (2002: 127) calls "the minimum possible situations under which art might be possible". In this sense, we might consider the practice that supports this thesis is not about 'making artefacts' (although it does produce artefacts and outcomes) or proving that this methodology is indicative of a certain kind of artwork (e.g. that it constructs a prescriptive form of what constitutes a practice of 'performative photography' in practices involving performance to camera). Instead it exists to interrogate, through artistic experimentation, the minimal possible situations in which performativity might arise in the practice of performance to camera. By controlling some elements and highlighting others through set tasks that allow for unpredictable results, we invite 'chance' as the unexpected research variable; that which cannot be foreseen. Iversen (2010: 19) states that in art this opportunity is not created by unbridled spontaneity or sheer chaos but operates within pre-determined conditions, ranging from the highly systematic to the informal.

The proposition here is that the practical fieldwork of this thesis follows a tradition stemming from conceptualism, employing artistic practice as a form of experimentation to generate visual data. The series of investigations follow 'score-like' parameters in order to set the potential variables that might contribute to the image's performativity, and then analyses on production of the image the relative successes and perceived failures of the experiment's undertaking. Through this process, the experiments and images of the chapters are refined in order to make conclusions.

Many of the performances made for camera played with the idea of repetition, instruction and gesture that could be likened to the Fluxus 'event score'⁵⁷. Though I did not work with strict

⁵⁷ A good definition of this is found in LaBelle (2002: 50) who writes: "[It proposes] the event itself is an articulation between artist and reader... It is a kind of secret passed in the operations of artistic practice as it attempts to extend past the object to meet the potential viewer or visitor. It is a verbalisation of possibility that suggests an entire philosophical and ontological shift that necessarily leaves the art object behind... setting in action language as a game of articulation, as event, in turn highlights language as a volatile medium, for event scores can be seen to teeter on the edge of comprehension, veering into poetry, into flights of double meaning, puns, suggestive absurdity, violence."

scores that had been written down and could therefore be transcribed into the body of the thesis as 'instruction', the caption/title of the image can be read as the 'score' of the piece, demonstrating the playfulness of language and opening up the idea of performer interpretation with spectatorial understanding⁵⁸. Sometimes I would take a turn of phrase or proverb and 'act out' that phrase in front of the camera, photographing the various results. At other times it would consist of one action repeated over and over with differing results and sometimes it would be a single performance demonstrated straight through as a 'task' to complete in front of the camera with the results displayed 'in sequence' as if forming a sentence of images with implied causality. Lushetich (2014: 56) describes this use of phrases to generate ideas as the artist 'speaking' from a position comparable to that of the Searlian declaration that inaugurates a new reality by means of the illocutionary force emanating from the artist's intention and position. The effect is simultaneously the fortification of the self-same position and the reinstatement of the divide between the expresser's position and the receiver's non-position. Lushetich writes: "The event score's heterogeneous descriptive-instructive variant expands not only bi-directionally, but as a multi-directional game of relay... Because it is a segment of 'scored' reality, often performed unwittingly... it is in perpetual circulation. Each time an unwitting performance is observed, or a witting one executed, a new move in the game is created". In saying this, she hints that visual reception provides 'the next move', which in Derridean terms could be the initiation of the endless deferral of signs.

Both Kosuth and Nauman, to some extent, play with these peculiarities of the *différance* of language and understanding by expressing it in a visual medium and in doing so they deconstruct the 'space' between the two. Kotz (2007) is helpful in making the link between conceptual art and performance-based pieces that were governed by a notational system or 'score'. She argues the emphasis that conceptual artists put on language had its roots in a

⁵⁸ Searle (1979: 48), explains this as the difference between "word-to-world" and "world-to-word" direction of fit, which implies the use of assertives by the means of which the speaker/writer tells the listener/reader how things are in the world. Because of this double, past and present intentionality that the declaration has the power to control the future, since it, in fact, informs the listener/reader of an 'already existing' state of affairs while the same state of affairs is still in the process of being stabilised. The dual direction of fit established by the event score expresses an oscillating undecidability between the subjectivist and objectivist accounts of language and thus the impossibility of a single governing principle. I additionally note this was not used as a strict method – I did not write the scores down for the intention to be used as a 'performance notation'. The methodology recognises I was influenced by the idea of linguistic play that is evidenced by such Fluxus practices and, as such, expresses it in these terms. It is possible to read the final captions/titles of the photographs as the 'score' from which I worked, and this plays on ironic titling employed by Bonnell and Nauman.

practice in which a verbal score or set of instructions was performed (whether explicit or implicit). When this strategy is annexed to photography, she writes, “such notational systems dislocate photography from the reproductive logic of original and copy to reposition it as a recording mechanism for specific realizations of general schemata” (2007: 194). Kotz points out how this brings the execution of a work closer to an utterance in language: “The work of art has been re-configured as a specific realization of a general proposition” (ibid.) What she means is that the score or instruction governs the individual utterance or performance. The analogy Kotz makes here between the pair of terms ‘instruction or score and performance’ and ‘linguistic system and individual utterance’ is usefully ambiguous, providing an outline of how the ‘implicit scores’ of the performed acts in the photographic output of this thesis come from the legacy of structural linguistics and a critique of ideas around repetition, reproduction, individuality and authorship.

Similarly, the *différance* of performance and photography uses the linguistic turn inherent in the conceptualist approach to highlight the gaps between utterance, meaning and understanding. Through employing terms like performativity and *différance*, I draw comparisons between the performative and structural deferral/differences between speech and writing, in that performing citations is likened to speech and the photograph its visual [written] transcript. The conclusions of each of the following chapters draw together the explorations by referring to how the switch in temporal register from performance to photograph is resolved and discusses how the power of this deferral invokes a ‘performative effect’.

Autoethnography and ‘mesearch’

To make explicit the relationship between the practice present in the thesis and the significance of the self-authorship in the images, the various artistic experiments and heuristic methodology employed are positioned as a mode of autoethnographic investigation⁵⁹. Using the idea of performativity as a way that connects performance citations to wider underpinning cultural references, the exegesis prioritises the idea of ‘lived experience’⁶⁰ and applies critical reflection of that experience as a way of creating knowledge. This is done by connecting practical

⁵⁹ Ellis (2004) describes autoethnographers as themselves the primary participant/subject of the research in the process of writing personal stories and/or narratives. Autoethnography “as a form of ethnography,” is “part auto or self and part ethno or culture” (Ellis, 2004: 31) and simultaneously “something different from both of them, greater than its parts” (ibid.: 32).

⁶⁰ Adapted from Goffman (1956) and his ideas around the presentation of self.

investigations to cultural theory through the 'fieldwork' of a single author that encompasses both the creative and technical aspects of performance to camera, offering a more holistic view of the genre of the practice (rather than focusing solely on the performance or photographic aspects).

Ellis (1997) describes this approach as a 'heartful' autoethnography: a celebration of concrete experience and intimate detail, which uses systematic sociological introspection and emotional recall to recount the significance of art production and its relationship to culture. Leavy (2015: 227) consolidates this, describing the visual arts as inherently autoethnographic in nature as the discipline is "a significant source of information about the social world... including the cultural dimensions of identity". This means individual identity and its representation in the visual arts can indicate discourses present at a solo and group level simultaneously. Therefore, the 'performance of' autoethnography in this thesis manifests corporeally and visually the dialogical praxis of critical theory and its manifestation through the self as a performing body, and how it is subsequently represented in the photograph. Langellier's (1999) notion of performativity plaits this theoretical and practical stance, detailing how in performing the individual can echo wider cultural narratives. Langellier makes specific reference to the 'performative' turn in contemporary society and scholarship, drawing a quintessential distinction between performance, "a term used to describe a certain type of particularly involved and dramatised oral narrative" (Langellier, 1999: 127), which "implies the transgressive desire of agency and action" (ibid.: 129), and performativity, which requires the performer of personal narrative to identify and critique the power relations rooted in the socio-historical contexts of discourse that are occurring in the citation of a particular act.

The emphasis of the practice present in the following chapters is on the 'knowledge-constructing' value of creation in the artistic process and the concept it embodies rather than judging any given image's individual merit as 'a work of art'. However, this does not mean to claim 'embodiment' as a self-evident gesture understood through seeing the work. Instead, drawing on Nelson (2013: 37), it may be suggested that the tacit can be made explicit through the artist's critical reflection, illustrating a 'know-what' rather than a 'know-how'. Sullivan (2005: 180) outlines that 'the visual' goes beyond a descriptive or representational form, as a means of creating and constructing images that form an evidential base revealing new knowledge where practice "can be used to move beyond the contribution to explanatory knowledge production, and to a more ambitious state of transformative knowledge construction". That is to say the act of constructing images also constructs knowledge rather than simply producing it and the aim

here is to emphasise how methodologically practice can be a research tool that generates conceptual frameworks.

Subsequently, the act of creating photographs through the practice of performance to camera in this thesis is a way of initiating the production of visual data. By taking on the role of both performer and photographer and 'writing through' the experience, the analysis uses the experience of doing and making as a way of feeding back into an existing body of critical knowledge, combining the personal account present in autoethnographic practice with the conceptualist idea of 'art as experiment'. Stated simply, the idea behind the practice is not to create images intended for exhibition. Nor are the images to be judged as having aesthetic value or as having a purpose as artefacts or artworks⁶¹. Instead they are framed as a series of conceptualist investigations that, through heuristic experimentation, provide a narrative arc that leads to conclusions about what performance 'does' in the still image by reflecting on the photograph's potential significance as a vehicle of knowledge.

Edward (2018: 33-35) terms this mode of practice-research 'mesearch'. By integrating heuristic methods with autoethnography and personal experience of practice, the researcher is able to call upon experiential engagement to rewrite and 're-right' the self from cultural assumptions and social representation to then resituate those actions within a theoretical model. This 'methodology' positions the performer as the *researcher researched* or the *researched researcher* in which the work generated becomes both an research account of the subject's own work while simultaneously providing the basis of an account of more general knowledge production. Therefore the self-authorship of making the images enables the performer to make both specific claims to the outcomes of practice while simultaneously being able to speak more generally about how the experience relates to the area of practice as a whole.

One may understand this by citing Park-Fuller (2000: 26) who explains how the performer, by rite of performing, can have the ability to speak about acts of social transgression. In doing so, the telling of the story itself becomes a transgressive act: a revealing of what has been kept hidden, a speaking of what has been silenced and an act of reverse discourse. In critically reflecting on how the tacit, internal experience of performance is made visible and external by the photograph, it reveals how the personal becomes public and the difference between what

⁶¹ This is because to do so would imply a use-value for the image. The stress is instead on the act, and knowledge-producing merit, of creating and making this kind of photographic work.

the performer knows and what the image knows. The dialogue present in the thesis attempts to bridge that gap by discussing the act of creating such an image and by revealing the artist's process and intention behind the photograph.

As the autoethnographic perspective of the thesis requires the author to speak from an element of personal experience, this has implications on the practicalities of the method. For instance, the variable of collaboration⁶² was limited as much as possible by creating photographs alone in the studio using a remote control or the self-timer on the camera. An assistant under my artistic direction took photographs in public surroundings when the previous methods proved impossible due to safety concerns⁶³. Usually, this assistant had little formal experience of photography and operated under my supervision to retain ownership and originality and to lessen the interference of another 'eye' on the work. Additionally, it retains the feature of the 'automatism' of the camera, positioning the person behind the camera as 'operator' or 'recorder' rather than artist or collaborator, introducing the element of chance associated with experimental, heuristic methodologies. Therefore, self-authorship became a critical part of the investigation to retain the breadth of perspective across the creative process. This also affected the form of photographic output: it appears to take the form of self-portraiture and, though the use of self merits some reflexive discussion due to the politics of identity (as touched on in chapter one and two in terms of gender performativity⁶⁴), for the purposes of cohesive linear exegesis, it has been tangential – and perhaps even parallel – to the main narrative of the thesis. Instead, the discourse highlights a more general account of the issues of performance and performativity in the photographic still image from those findings.

⁶² The effect of another **artist** (rather than perhaps an 'operator') behind the camera could affect aesthetic choices where the photographer takes on a 'directorial' role and the performer becomes a model rather than the conceptual driver, proponent and 'creative director' of the work. I tried to reduce this where possible to retain authorship. There is clearly an issue of the 'role' of the photographer that bears more discussion in another forum. For the purposes of this thesis, I am assumed and was agreed by my assistants to be the 'author' of the work.

⁶³ This was an unfortunate compromise, but requires acknowledgement because of the practicalities. For me, the camera and its operator were the only 'active' audience members of this piece, even if it did take place in public situations. Brisley (2007) reflects on his series of photographs made with Leslie Haslam that the photographer is 'direct and objective' and that the camera "acts as a shield or a mask. The face is hidden by the lens. It removes the photographer from experience as being part of the scene to one looking in or on" (pp. 87). I use this position along with my decision to use assistance of people with little experience of photography as a way of justifying the outcomes for this chapter, so as to preserve an idea of 'automatism' and reduce the idea of the photographer being 'in' or 'part of' the work.

⁶⁴ Arguably, the idea of gender performativity also needed to be acknowledged when and where relevant as it is an established discourse and it is difficult to talk of the term without mentioning these aspects.

On method

The idea of heurism is drawn from Moustakas (1990: 26-31)⁶⁵, which is also condensed and echoed by Livingston (2005) as a process of refinement that he distils into four stages:

1. Preparation – plans, kernels of ideas, technique experimentation.
2. Incubation – Diverted away from idea, unconscious work continues in a freer and more associative mode.
3. Illumination – Aware of promising ideas and possible solutions that 'pop' into view. This could take the form of 'suddenly waking up' with an idea.
4. Verification and elaboration – reject some of the inspired insights while retaining and revising others.

(Adapted from Livingston, 2005: 33-34)

The parameters of the practice are as below:

1. The artist does not intend the photograph to be an indexical access point to the past but is creating an image to be received in the future as a form of 'deferred performance', due to the *différance* between performance act and its transcription via photography. Therefore, the performance is primarily to and for the camera.
2. Performative practice is that which calls upon the citational nature of performativity through repetition, simple instruction, score or 'cultural referencing' (as detailed by Iverson, 2009) that shows how citational acts can differ on repetition and calls to attention the temporal pull between performance and photography. Intentionally performed acts are a tool to call upon citations and theatricality as a medium to rupture the acceptance of these citations, acting as a 'photographic break'.
3. All acts, whether repetitive or singular, contain a value of 'canned chance': an unplanned element that plays with the temporal value of performance and photography.
4. The photographic performance is read as a 'performative statement' that places the citation within a larger cultural framework, and conclusions are drawn as to how the *performance* has become *performative* in its transcription to a still image.

⁶⁵ Moustakas cites these as initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication and creative synthesis.

As the practice gained momentum, it was refined into three categories to form the structure of the body of work. Beginning with the hypothesis that the performative effect of photography arises from its time-based tensions, it was tested under the three subsequent conditions. Below is an explanation of the three areas that form the groundings of each of the chapters contained in the thesis, detailing the stages of research each section represents and the variables it tests:

1. If we suppose that performativity arises because performance ‘moves’ and the photograph is still, then we are looking at how the movement of the body relates to space within the frame of the photograph. This required an examination of **notions of instantaneity** and body-object relationships, and how movement through a space captured in an instantaneous image produces this effect.
2. If, however, the photograph’s performativity arises because of the difference between the act of witnessing ‘in liveness’ and ‘as photograph’, then I decided to echo the early cultures of performance art identifiable in the works of Vito Acconci⁶⁶, the Viennese Aktionists⁶⁷ and Fluxus artists like Nam June Paik⁶⁸ to investigate this aspect through **performance interventions**. Specifically, I looked at queer performance interventions and whether gender performativity or discourses of ‘otherness’ have a role in this effect.
3. Lastly, if performativity arises because of the tension between the repetition of citational practice and live art’s unrepeatability, then we can investigate how repetition both as a performed act and as a photographic one reveals ‘the performative’. This was analysed with both repetitive and one off performance acts displayed as a **sequence of images**: how the visual interpretation of the ‘sentence-image’ ‘undoes’ the act.

The performances through which they were produced did have an improvisational aspect to them to generate movement and action. That means sometimes the work did have an unplanned element, the aspects of which are dissected in the reflective process. Similarly, if photographic projects were re-made several times, it was difficult to get the same results because the performance method used shared a continuously differentiating element. This began to form a part of the method: the individuality of each session and the subsequent

⁶⁶ See, for example, *Following Piece* (1969) and *Photo Piece* (1970)

⁶⁷ Like *Action Pants: Genital Panic* (1969) by VALIE EXPORT

⁶⁸ More specifically, I am thinking of performances like *Dragging Suite* and *Zen for Street*. These scores are cited in Friedman, Smith and Sawchyn (2002: pp. 80-88).

discovery of its irreproducibility became integral to the practice and is synonymous with the shared quality of live art's distinctiveness and the photograph's 'looping' performativity as discussed by Von Hantelmann (2010) and Shusterman (2012). However, what was fundamental to the method was leaving the opportunity for chance open.

On editing and 'intentism'⁶⁹

It is also recognised that the concept of intention has an effect in relation to editing, and that an 'intentional' strategy has been used by both performance practitioners and the photographers who work with performance to understand why we both revere and critique the medium of performance to camera. Here, we can draw on the school of 'Intentism' in order to explore the question of the role of artistic intention. Pelosi (2009) describes this as follows:

Intentists believe that their artwork is able to convey their artistic intention to their intended audience... Intentists celebrate the 'creative trail' in their work by frequently keeping elements of the editing processes in their work.

(Pelosi 2009: 20-21)

That is to say that though we can learn from interpretation and reception of such documents, if we put the author back into the picture then it provides an awareness of the impact that inception, creation, process and selection can bring. When one knows that a performance has the potential to be documented, there is then an intentional editing and presentation process before the document is exhibited to its wider audience. Intentists call this 'Palimpsestism' (Pelosi, 2011: xx): the many layers of the creative and editing process that are subsequently embedded in one work.

There is an implicit postulation around the notion of intention and the intention behind the creation of photographs that work with performance. Not every photograph of a performance that is made is subsequently exhibited, displayed or disseminated, just as in fine art photographic practice, not every photograph made can be considered 'art'.

⁶⁹ Parts of this passage have been published in my co-authored chapter, Newall, Skinner and Taylor (2017).

So even while we think the process is 'unconscious', the ideation process is a result of familiarising oneself with technique and incubating that idea, trying it out and refining it. This procedure could be seen as a continuous artistic loop that feeds continuously into itself and constitutes artistic output.

The *intention* to produce a photographic document through performance that is performative is actively acknowledged in the process and the practice is informed by it. Using Livingston's (2005; see above pp. 66) steps as a model, the photographic documents produced during this period of research always had 'intention' behind them and was inherent within the process. In recognising intention, we acknowledge elements such as editing and selection as part of the creation of the work. Artistic intention is the beginning of a process that ends in spectatorial reception; there are many stages in between from creation to editing to preparing for exhibition, all of which 'feed into' the final result.

The reason to mention intention and its importance is that there has been very little recognition of this process in terms of the photographic performance documentation that has been received in the canon. How can we discuss the 'authenticity' of such documents when inherent to the image's creation there is a process of intention before it reaches the spectator? Are we asking if the photograph is authentic in relation to 'liveness' or authentic to the phenomenology of 'performance'? In the former case, we are then asking documentation to be 'documentary' but in the latter we are permitting the act of editing, compositing and composition to best transmit this performativity.

It leads us to conclude that in the creation of these documents a particular result was expected from the photograph that in relation to the tensions between performance and photography and for the purposes of this thesis I propose to be 'performative' in effect. Selecting one image over another to make available to the public declares intention. Making a decision about when to release the shutter declares intention. No matter how 'accidental' the results may be in this process, intention is always present. Conversely, if an artist chooses more formal aesthetics with which to present this documentation (to produce a more 'professional' image), then the same level of forethought will have occurred in the act of documenting.

Summary

In conclusion, this thesis uses practice to show that critical theory can be evaluated and supported by creative work, but can also feed into the canon through the knowledge it produces. By following a tradition of conceptualism in the visual arts, practice is used as a way to conduct 'artistic experiments' to test out theoretical findings and generate a form of visual data. These experiments are then developed using a heuristic method as a way of incrementally building from smaller acts to more involved image compositions.

Positioned as an autoethnographic approach that underpins critical assertions through the construction of information that the creative act of the artist can generate, conclusions are made by linking findings from practice to critical sources. The resulting photographs from the period of fieldwork are presented in text to support contextual findings while simultaneously building a narrative through which a new framework can be generated and conclusions drawn.

CHAPTER ONE: THE INSTANTANEOUS AND THE PERFORMATIVITY OF MOVEMENT

Introduction: snapshot experience

One of the most immediate and visually apparent ways to compare performance and photography is that performance is characterised by its movement, while photography is typified by its 'stillness'. Because performance is constrained by the flow of time, the still image offers the opportunity for performed actions to exist outside of a linear temporality. As time-based practices, performance tests photography's ability to make time seemingly stop just as photography tests the ability of performance to transcend temporalities.

Barthes introduces the *punctum* (2000 [1980]: 91) by calling for a photographic practice that would cut through the 'generalised image repertoire' to touch the 'absent real'. He believed this was made possible by the unintended, chance occurrence that photography had the ability to generate – registered by the spectator as the *punctum*. This chapter investigates the idea of a 'snapshot' experience that invites instantaneous chance occurrences created by performance to be captured via the still image and analyses the performative effects of the perceived suspension of time in such images. Through a series of repeated actions to camera that aim to 'freeze-frame' a moment of action in one image, I propose how performance becomes performative through the withdrawal (and subsequent imaginative reactivation) of movement. Drawing on theorists from the fields of object-oriented ontology and performance theory, I discuss the body's relationship to objects, as well as its relationship to the space in which the movement occurs, uncovering a kinaesthetic experience that can express a level of 'disorientation' with one's place in the world. This, in turn, unveils a piercing trauma general to human experience: that gravity forces its effect on us all the time, but only when we slow its effects down to a single frame can we possibly contemplate its overbearing potential on our everyday lives, and how that has been embodied in our collective civil imagination.

Though one may initially consider the 're-animation' or illusion of movement that can be portrayed by the photograph and anticipated by the spectator, what the practical investigations unveil is that movement 'speaks' for itself in the most performative sense – as do objects and our relation to them and the space in which we inhabit. Foregrounding this is the concept of

‘queer phenomenology’ (as detailed by Ahmed, 2006)⁷⁰: by revealing the gesture of the ‘instantaneous’ moment through these images of a male body falling, it queers our normative relationship with objects, space and time. Through *différance*, the spectator defers all possibilities and suspends the potential fate of the performer in the photograph.

Subsequently, this particular course of investigation discusses how the image of ‘the falling man’ taps into the cultural trauma of the twenty-first century⁷¹ to illustrate that when those possibilities are deferred, it maps the performer back into a series of historical and social contexts. When the transition between moments is *withdrawn* in the photograph, the performativity of the ‘instantaneous’ performance in the still image allows us to consider that we are ‘falling within a framework’ defined both by the physical laws of gravity and by the cultural rules that govern our use of objects. In this instance, what the performance does in the still image is afford the spectator the physical and temporal space to take a departure – or leap of faith – away from a normative mode of engagement with the world to see the act outside of its everyday execution. It is then reconfigured through the social and cultural provocations it poses by suspending the possibilities of interactions with time, space and objects.

Activating objects

Campany (2005: 51) suggests the allure of the instantaneous image is that it is ‘a trap for the incidental’, pitting the camera’s perceived automatism against the motion of life⁷². However, we may consider that our idea of continuous motion is based on our lagging perception, where Viriio (1991:1-10) describes the optical process as always suffering from a time lag: from the

⁷⁰ This is explained in more detail in the following exegesis, but as an introductory note Ahmed details how queerness suggests ‘orientation’ and that ‘orientation’ also defines our relationship to the world through its inferred meaning of ‘direction’ and ‘directed towards’. Therefore ‘queer’ relations with objects are a way of disorientating our usage of them.

⁷¹ Provoked by Richard Drew’s iconic picture of *The Falling Man*, taken by the Associated Press photographer at the site of the Twin Towers terrorist attack on September 11th, 2001. The point here is that images of a man falling are now read in relation to this photograph, echoing a wider cultural significance that is discussed on pp. 88-94 of this thesis.

⁷² Likewise De Duve (1978: 117, 121) separated the photograph into two forms: the time exposure and the snapshot with the latter described as embodying a form of trauma linked to the ‘inaccessibility’ of the present in its punctual suddenness. We experience the event or movement as represented before it is completed and yet long after it has finished in the physical world; of being simultaneously too late and too early.

time it takes for light to bounce off an object and reach our eyes, that when we 'blink' we are cutting off a frame of motion and where light itself collapses in both space and time. He asserts that although society is obsessed with 'speed', we are mostly experiencing events after they have already disappeared. This dislocates our definition of the present as a constantly experienced past blended with immediate projections into the future. Therefore we could motion that photography of this nature plays to something inherent in our perceptual experience of the world if life is experienced as a sequence of short sharp images that are then 'edited together' in our mind.

In order to try to capture what Campamy and Virilo describe as a commonly experienced time lag, the practical investigations commenced by looking at objects portraying a sense of movement that can be missed in the blink of an eye. Figure 2.1 illustrates one of many attempts to 'capture' and visualise this sense of instantaneity by using party poppers. Because there can be no predictable sense of what the streamers would look like once photographed or the patterning of the streamers that would occur when the flash was activated, the results were varied and unpredictable. In one session, anywhere between 50-100 party poppers could be released to try and get the 'right moment'. The same repeated action of operating the string at the correct time gave a variety of different results, but the hope was to evoke pictorially the 'momentary joy' associated with party poppers, eliciting both excitement and fright.

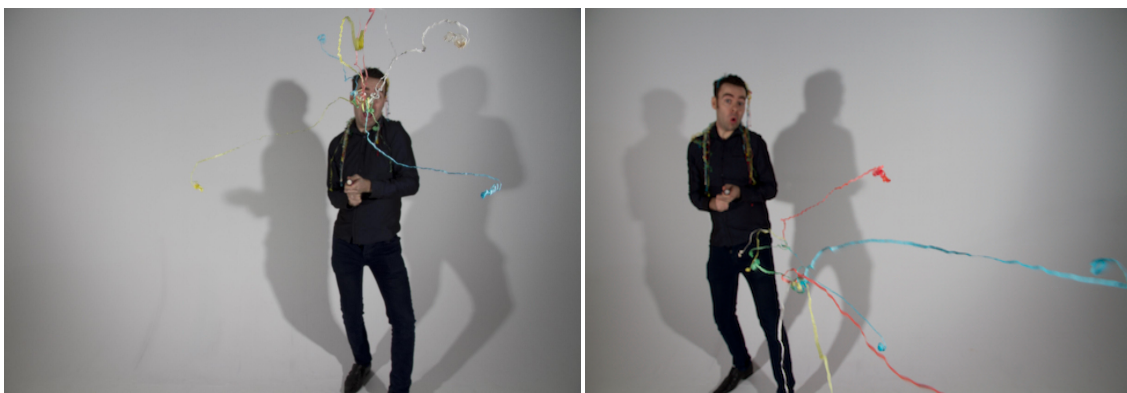


Figure 2.1 – Initial party popping experiment

In this particular image, the streamers seem to group at the centre and burst outwards, foregrounding the face of the operator of the party popper. This gave a sense of anonymity to

the 'activator' of the object in the photograph, making the performer a secondary agent to the action.



Figure 2.2 – Continuing party poppers

On continuing the investigations, the images above (figure 2.2) contain elements of the previous pictures, with the pattern of streamers bursting forwards towards the camera. Nonetheless, there was still what was perceived to be a 'lack' within the image. Of particular note here is the attempt for the performer to take on a more integral role in the picture through the intentional use of costume, the exaggerated gesture and the lighting adjustments to reduce shadow. Repeating the theme by bursting balloons proved to be much harder. Timing became increasingly difficult and the moment of the burst could not be captured. Instead what is apparent is the moment of tension before the balloon bursts. Initially, it was thought this was a technical issue; that the intuitive, internal sense of when to pop the balloon was out of sync with the camera flash. Nonetheless, it still seems that the performance of the action was 'disappearing' behind these objects with and the function of the performer within the image becomes a questionable presence. This is could be because the 'cause and effect' of the presence of a performer is only evident when the images are displayed sequentially (such as in figure 2.3).



Figure 2.3 – Working with popping balloons

Doane (2005) states that for movement to appear in the photograph, then the moment must disappear and by displaying one image, we play on the Deleuzian (1984) notion of *durée*, or the duration of movement between one image and another. Refuting the idea of ‘cinema’ or ‘cinematic’ as series of images put together as if they were in motion, Deleuze argues that cinema produces ‘false movement’ due to its saturation of images. Cinema equates all images as the same making them what he calls ‘any-image-whatever’ (Deleuze, 1984: 5-21)⁷³. By that reasoning, selecting one image, then, highlights the importance of that one still, elevating its status above other images within a potentially continuous set. The solitary image in such instantaneous experiments has power because of this ‘cinematic’ effect. Rather the multiple sets play present above play the act out to completion, and so loses the potential to ‘move’ – or does not harness the potential of movement – in the same way. Therefore, the instantaneous image has to have power as a solitary photograph: rather than relying on the ‘false movement’ of cinema, it instead activates the promise of movement through the potential of *durée*.

In tandem with this was the negotiated presence of a performer in the frame as, in both cases, I appear ‘as operator of the object’ and nothing more. While there is some evidence of a causal relationship, what was not considered is that the performer’s ontology (or the ontology of any given operator of an object in the image) is different in substance to the object’s ontology and a

⁷³ Deleuze defines the shot (which is dependent on the position and movement of the camera) as the movement-image (ibid.: 22) and we could go further to draw parallels between Deleuze’s ‘action-image’ and the performative image, as he writes, “We hardly believe any longer that a global situation can give rise to an action which is capable of modifying it – no more than we believe that an action can force a situation to disclose itself, even partially” (ibid.: 206). Here he questions the idea of an image’s ability to ‘do’ in the new light of cinema.

human presence does not immediately supplant or supersede that of the object's presence. Establishing the relationship of experience between human and object is important to the agency of the action and the object's and the performer's individual performances can be seen as separate and bear the possibility of different potentialities. Therefore, the presence of the performer has to work in conjunction with the object in order to imply the causality or relationality between the two 'beings' to justify both presences.

Latour (1999: 165) touches on this idea of the 'agency' of objects and its human relation stating that an object is "defined by its associations and is an event created by the occasion of each of these situations" but the purposeful action and intentionality are not the properties of objects and neither are those qualities the properties of humans (ibid.: 192). Miller (2013: 58) expands on this agentic quality: "Grace shows up in the way that agency simultaneously endows an object with and divests of itself. Agency is the grace of acting for oneself on another's behalf. Or, agency is the grace of acting for another on one's own behalf". This phenomenon could be referred to as a kind of 'body-object activation': in this instance, the body and the object work in conjunction to initiate a dialogue to produce an effect that actualises an innate potential of both beings. It could also be likened to Merleau-Ponty's (1978: 206)⁷⁴ phenomenology of perception, in which we experience the object and the object also 'experiences' us. The body is also an object from which experience is defined; each interaction shared with external objects affects our internal perception, forming the basis of 'experience'.

In these images, there is an over-reliance on the object's association with the notion of event to provide a channel for agency through impressions synonymous with party poppers and balloons: in this example, the idea of party, fun, festivity and excitement. However the 'lack' that could potentially be perceived when seeing the image was a lack of a 'relationship' – that perception and activation was not established between myself and the object. I, as performer, am secondary to the object's action and the perceived intention or motivation for activating the object in such a manner was absent. Therefore, the performer 'disappears' behind the object,

⁷⁴ In which he discusses things are that upon which our body has a "grip" (*prise*), while the grip itself is a function from birth to experience the world's things. The world and the sense of self are emergent phenomena in an ongoing becoming. In example from text: "Every external perception is immediately synonymous with a certain perception of my body, just as every perception of my body is made explicit in the language of external perception... We shall need to reawaken our experience of the world as it appears to us in so far as we are in the world through our body, and in so far as we perceive the world with our body. But by thus remaking contact with the body and with the world, we shall also rediscover ourselves, since, perceiving as we do with our body, the body is a natural self and, as it were, the subject of perception" (ibid., from text: 206).

and the object disappears behind the action, in turn belying the activation of the object's full potential.

The various potentialities of how an object can be activated were further evidenced when improvising around these more straightforward actions. For example, after one session when the streamers were all over the studio floor, I began throwing them around in the air, experimenting by posing with them and jumping in the air when they did pop (illustrated in figure 2.4). The resulting images seemed to contain more 'energy', establishing causality and mutual reactions between body and object. The object becomes 'activated by' the body and likewise the body reciprocates with its 'experience of' the object. The sense of 'party' comes from this dialogue. The images illustrate that though the party poppers were 'used' and would be discarded, a new manifestation had been established, challenging a view that they could not be activated and realised under a different circumstance once expended.



Figure 2.4 – The party poppers appear 'revitalised' under different manifestations and activations

Bryant (2014) suggests that specific 'usages' for objects is a common misconception about the nature of an object's ontology. Instead, there are certain qualities that under different circumstances an object 'does', which he refers to as local manifestations. However, this does

not equate to the actualisation of the object's 'power'. For example, if a coffee mug is blue, under different lighting the shade may vary, but this does not stop the actualisation of blue as the object's power. He writes even though an object may be 'actualised' in its temporary state, it still possesses other potential qualities that can be realised:

Actualisation is a temporal process... [And] there is a tendency for objects to be confused with their qualities, with their local manifestations in extensity, by virtue of how powers become invisible. Substances, in their actualised state, still harbour volcanic powers within them.

(Bryant, 2014: 77-78)

Returning to the party poppers, in popping them to capture the streamers 'mid-air' it invoked a temporary and local manifestation of its abilities as an object. As a consequence, both the object and the performer 'withdraw' behind this manifestation of the object: it appears to be expended and the performer seems to disappear behind this as it becomes foregrounded in the image. However, in the 'real-time' setting of the studio once the party popper is popped it does not cease to exist: the streamers and plastic container of which it is composed still exist in their 'exhausted' state. Therefore, the object does not reach its actualisation but recomposes in another local manifestation. The 'volcanic powers' to which Bryant refers is a method that presents or utilises the object in such a way to demonstrate the potential energies of the object and the power it can manifest beyond the way it is normatively presented. This is possibly why in the improvised images (figure 2.4) the party poppers exhibit a renewed sense of life, as they are re-animated by and through the body despite having been expended, it can be recognised that they can still manifest their 'energy' in other ways. The 'doing' of the objects is not necessarily in their motion or function under local manifestations, but in the actualisation that realises a certain power that could be utilised to rethink the function of objects both in the image and everyday life.

Evident in the practical investigations is an inference that the performer's interaction with objects present in the frame needs to be much more embodied and necessary to justify the performer's presence in the image. Therefore, relying on the movement of objects alone to convey a sense of performance through their own activation or manifestation can negate the presence of a performer, or can even lead to a lack of the feeling of instantaneity in the photograph.

First footsteps into falling

In order to 'strip back' the complications of relying on the object to perform on the behalf of a given performer, it seemed necessary to explore how the motion of the body alone is able to produce its own instantaneous action. The most immediate way of doing this is through the act of falling, which can be repeated endlessly and give varying results without relying on any external props.

Sharrocks (2013: 53) explains the investment value in falling is huge, but it reveals something inherent to the condition of Western adulthood, stating that, "[The fall explores] adventure and progress: the whole of life a balancing act, the one just as necessary as the other. Exploring any pain in the fall helps question what and how we learn. It is in the nature of things to fall." Through disorientating the traditional sense of body-space relations, by 'falling through' it, movement can 'speak' for itself.

It is then perhaps easy to consider how the suspension of motion inhabiting an intermediate point phenomenologically might hold some fascination for the spectator as it suspends the consequences of a relatively common experience of natural law that represents something with huge physical investment. Because of the associations of being 'accidental', falling naturally lends itself to the idea of instantaneity. However 'performing a fall' is in itself an oxymoron – to do something 'accidentally on purpose'. This is especially true when caught at its apex by the camera as it gives the appearance that it is constantly in flux – never quite one thing or the other. It is both controlled and uncontrolled and, upon commencing such investigations in the studio, it is difficult to analyse why and how a fall can 'succeed' or 'fail'.

Harvey (2013) explains this dilemma and why we might be torn between the perception of 'authentic falling' and why as a performer or choreographer an 'authentic fall' is almost impossible. He states that in most contexts helpless falling is unacceptable, however 'choreographed' falling is different. He writes:

When one intends to truly, helplessly fall in dance and performance art choreography, this is not possible. From a position influenced by Jacques Derrida's *différance*, the moment we say we intend to fall before an audience is

the moment we suspend its eventuality through a never-ending play between not falling and falling.

(Harvey, 2013: 83-84)

As previously discussed, the concept of *différance* applies so particularly to photography and its performativity rendering another layer onto this act of falling when it becomes equated to the difference/deferral of the idea of 'accident' or the suspension of control in 'automatism'. Through a sustained push into the space of failure, an aim of being able to 'truly fall' to suspend the expectation of such an 'accidental' act could be flawed. However, when the fall is subsequently deferred on its transcription to the photograph, it creates an infinite loop between the launch of the fall and its perceived landing. Citing Read (2004: 85), Harvey goes further to say that the audience expect more the promise that lies within such an act rather than the 'truth': "not so much lying but perjuring oneself to those who bear witness to the promise, failing and falling". The preliminary steps into this area of investigation illustrate the idea of succeeding to fail and how it subsequently becomes embodied in the still image become an essential part of inviting risk into the image that gives a sense of the instantaneous.

By looking at figure 2.5 – some initial exploration into the act of falling in which I 'fell' at the point of the camera flash – it is evident less successful attempts appear more 'balanced' and 'choreographed'. Demonstrating a fall means illustrating or committing to a sort of unexpected awkwardness or clumsiness. Often one has to be willing to be 'thrown' by the body into these poses to fall without effort – or to actually fall onto the studio floor after the photograph had been taken so that the footing appears somehow 'wrong' or 'off' as if another step could not be taken without a complete collapse. In the last picture above, the body is contorted backwards extending the length of the torso; the gauche positioning of the left hand seems to indicate a sense of abandonment in bodily control, reminiscent of Robert Longo's collection *Men In The Cities* (1979) in that it wavers between convulsion and choreography.



Figure 2.5 - First steps into falling

In contrast to other falls, where there seems to be no sense of recovery or ‘righting’ oneself from the fall, figure 2.6 is not as successful in conveying a sense of suspended animation. The right leg is firmly planted on the floor and recuperation seems possible so that the fall ‘fails’:



Figure 2.6 – Is it possible to ‘right’ this wrong footing?

With sustained practice of falling, it started to become a tacit knowledge to know ‘how’ and ‘when’ to fall. With progression, a sense of timing and ‘choreography’ developed, influencing the

decisions about when to fall, how to fall and where. The images subsequently became imbued with this impression of choreographic movement prompted both by the unpredictability of the movement and the illusion of imperfect poise. The idea of action and automatism is key here and the agency of the artist to shape that. The action of falling was continuously delivered and over time it started to 'work with' the automatism of the camera to produce something that appeared in the photographic image 'as an actual fall'.

When the performer is locked in photographic freefall, it demonstrates an individual giving themselves over to the unknown so that spectators are invited to kinaesthetically explore such a fall and phenomenologically experience the submission of such an act without the investment, assimilating the experience within their knowledge of the 'balancing act' of their own lives. This is discussed by Reason (2008: 7), who in his analysis of still images of dance makes the assertion that the sense of movement or kinaesthesia means nothing without the emotive investment and connection attached to it: "This understanding seems to be located around its unsatisfactory relationship with the word 'empathy'... It is not about just the movement but the connection, the emotion, about what it means and feels like to us. We can observe and interpret the kinaesthetic, but that does not necessarily mean we have any deeper or more lasting imaginative connection to it."

This could explain why, in photographic practice, a fall of this kind contains a level of magnetism in its deferral. As the performer is suspended between one point and the other, the promise the fall delivers is never fulfilled; never can be fulfilled. In the underlying circumstances, the performer may fall in the performance space repeatedly, but in the photograph they never can fall nor can they be subject to the disappointment of landing except, perhaps, if the spectator wishes them to. In this way, the photographic fall becomes both absolutely perfect and a total failure. There is no defined conclusion to the fall: it falls continuously, constantly moving itself away from the past and propelling itself forward into the future. And, because the photographic fall is fixed between its launch and perceived failure, it gives way to another aspect of falling – submission. To fall means to give the body over to gravity and while there is risk, there is also release. The spectator can choose to submit to the image's sense of movement as they are cradled by its safety while simultaneously enthralled by its sense of vulnerability and danger.

Ascertained both from working with objects and a brief departure into working solely with the body, there are two conclusions to take forward. Firstly, if objects are present in the frame then

there must to be a sense of relationship between the performer's body and the object. Secondly, if there is to be a sense of instantaneity, there also has to be a sense of risk and vulnerability that looks almost as though it is a 'purposeful accident'. In many respects, the performer has to invite the possibility of chance into the equation because failure, or preparing to fail, becomes an apparent part of the instantaneous. It is the possibility of failure that opens up the ambiguity of the image and enriches it with interpretive potential. Therefore, both the object and the action have to push the performer into that space of risk in order to have a quality of the instantaneous that gives way to the image's 'performativity'.

Establishing body-object relationship

Advancing the concepts of improvisation, risk and failure, the findings culminated while experimenting with a broken umbrella: an object that, in itself, is so often meant to shelter and protect us, but so often fails in its function. A combination of Jeff Wall's *A Sudden Gust Of Wind* (1993) as well as Gene Kelly's legendary dance in *Singin' In the Rain* (1952) came to mind, so I decided to fall backwards repeatedly with the umbrella. This umbrella, now defunct, is not able to save or catch the performer from the fall and has in fact become 'useless' in its original intended purpose. But combining this with 'renewing' the umbrella's sense of ontology under a manifestation or actualisation of its properties, it was used repeatedly to fall over backwards, as though being caught by an imaginary gust of wind and blown away. The images juxtapose the vulnerability of the act of falling with the 'hope' of being saved by clutching an object that may provide respite or recovery from such a fall (as evidenced in figure 2.7). However, the instability of the object's manifestation makes that hope questionable.





Figure 2.7 – Reintroducing objects

The addition of a simple object starts to introduce context to the image – a reason for the fall. Because the studio space is stripped back and bare, there is an implicit knowledge from the spectator that the act is staged. But the introduction of an object that the body relates to changes the dynamic of the space and transforms it into a place where anything can be rendered onto it. The stark minimalist shadow highlights the isolation of the performer and his relation to the studio space while adding contrast to the foreground of performer and object providing a solipsistic note to the environment. This effect is at its height in the below image, *Imaginary Winds* (figure 2.8):



Figure 2.8 – Imaginary Winds

The posture of extending through the whole body lends a strong sense of choreography to the act. The arms behave almost like a level, trying to balance out the body while the head seems uncontrollably thrown back with the umbrella unable to shield whatever force is perceived to be coming from outside the frame. The absurdity of the image lends a sense of comedy that 'masks' both the blow of the wind and any perceived fall on behalf of the performer.

Taking falling further

The interplay with objects that had become revitalised through a new manifestation that belies its original purpose delivers a sense of hysteria with the image; this 'playing' with the function of both the object and the body started to reveal a new sense of 'doing' in the resulting images. The perceived notions of what the objects are supposed to 'do' and how the performer is supposed to act with the objects are subverted, emphasising a repetitive level of failure (failure to behave 'appropriately', failure to remain still and/or upright) while also inferring safety through the presence of the object, representing a misplaced sense of hope. The usage present in the images inverts the citations of the object and how we are supposed to 'perform' with that particular artefact.

The process and product seem to be a manifestation of Winnicott's theories on playing and reality (1971: 79)⁷⁵. To 'comfort' the experience of the fall for both the spectator and performer, the object takes on the role of a 'transitional object' through we each might simultaneously experience the fall in a mediated fashion. The transitional object balances any anxiety experienced by the spectator that is produced by the fall, perceived as a supporting aid to the movement. The studio space itself becomes a transitional space through which to play with the object: the 'in-between'. In this space, the performer is afforded the opportunity to interact with the object in a series of failures that constitute a 'playing with' of the object that is played out in front of the camera.

⁷⁵ Abridged, from the text, Winnicott describes these conditions as aspects of transitional phenomena: "1. The nature of the object; 2. The infant's capacity to recognize the object as 'not-me'; 3. The place of the object—outside, inside, at the border; 4. The infant's capacity to create, think up, devise, originate, produce an object; 5. The initiation of an affectionate type of object relationship. I have introduced the terms 'transitional object' and 'transitional phenomena' for designation of the intermediate area of experience, between the thumb and the teddy bear, between the oral eroticism and true object-relationship."

This continued with in the next series (figure 2.9), where a stool was used for forward rolls and posing upside down, leaning on it for support:



Figure 2.9 – Using a stool to roll

The first image seems almost sculptural, but the frustration conveyed in the facial expression indicates a difficulty in finding and holding a pose, constantly pushing back towards failure. The level of repetition and concept of the gesture made intentional posing impossible: the facial expressions become secondary. However, when the resulting image loses its sense of transition (for example, in figure 2.10), there is less of a sense of anticipation as the image portrays the action arriving at the ‘end’ of this transmitted experience.



Figure 2.10 – Falling off the stool

In this particular investigation, a stool was used to ease the head to the ground and then pulling it away as gravity took effect. In the below image, both the stools legs and my legs are off the ground, encapsulating that pivotal moment where the risk of the photograph reaches a cusp in the arc of movement:



Figure 2.11 – A Lesson In Falling

The expressive legs are splayed and almost form an awkwardly imperfect right angle. The jacket lining is revealed and the eyes are shut, as the full effect of the fall is felt and the fall enters its uncertain transitional phase. Winnicott's ideas around transitional phenomena begin to take on a phenomenological tone. If we accept that the idea of transitional objects as a method for the individual to distinguish between 'me' and 'not-me', then these acts of falling create tensions between body and object, bodily experience and experience of that object. In the performance of the images, the subject uses 'not-me' objects through which to explore 'me' and the inhabited space. The spectator not only sees this relationship but also experience themselves ('me') and the performer ('not-me') in a similar way as they interact with the 'image as object'. Kuhn (2013) describes this as a conduit that runs through the creation of spaces and frames, providing a channel of passage between the performance moment and the moment in which it is viewed:

Potential space has a key role to play in people's inner and outer worlds. It's sphere of activity lies between these two worlds, between not-me; while at the same time it acts as a bridge and me... This trope of physical movement back and forth across boundaries or frontiers an embodied quality about it... [which] can be literal – physical as well as metaphorical-psychical; and this is apparent in processes of separation-individuation.

(Kuhn, 2013: 15)

Playfulness in these images is also offset by the unforeseeable future or consequences of the action and not all falls are 'cushioned' by the presence of objects – sometimes the risk itself is posed by the relationship between body and object. This can be seen in the image *Falling Wall* (figure 2.12) when a piece of photographic board falls towards the body. It was made of polystyrene, rendering it relatively harmless. However, there are two things to note here. Firstly, in the still image, the thick black edge of the board gives it the appearance of having weight enough to cause serious impact and secondly, even though the board was lightweight, it did not stop eliciting a reaction of fear and danger. The final result gives the impression that there are serious implications to the board falling:



Figure 2.12 – Falling Wall

It is evident how the consequences of this action may differ from *Imaginary Winds*, in that it attributes responsibility to the performer's failure to employ the umbrella under its correct manifestation. Here it is the object itself that is causing the idea of falling, with the body reacting to the consequences of that fall that appear casually as though they will be dangerous to the performer when realised to its natural conclusion.

Sattig (2015: 161) calls our view where we see a linear spatio-temporal narrative as governing our relationship with object as 'cheap determinism'. He says that we could argue the world is deterministic as there is only one way that it can evolve, compatible with the laws of physics. But the extent of this reasoning is determined by 'strong' or 'weak' qualitative determinism and this is not always congruent with the nature of objects and existence. For example, if we fold a paper plane back into a piece of paper, the paper plane disappears from existence, but the paper continues, illustrating a violation of determinism that should not be so easy. Circumstances like these pose a threat to our 'common-sense' perception of objects.

Just like the party poppers, it would be easy to determine that they had been used and discarded, but when re-animated by the body it disrupts such a deterministic view. Similarly, the outcome of these scenarios (such as in *Falling Wall* above) seem like they would be relatively easy to determine; as phenomenological experience of normative body-object relations would govern that the fall is expended and exerted on by gravity. The old adage 'what goes up must come down' comes into play and so there is an assumed anticipation of this fact on viewing these images. But by photographing these acts and suspending the outcomes, we also suspend this idea of cheap determinism based on spatio-temporal relationships (however grounded in our tacit knowledge of the laws of physics they may be) and the resulting images, as Sattig puts it, 'violate' what we see as physical rules that we must submit to: gravity is one law it is extremely hard to defy on an everyday basis. The photograph conceals consequences and freezes them, unfolding as 'that which befalls us'; a surprise anticipation of a horizon of consequence that is endlessly deferred.

Derrida (2007) speaks of this as the 'event' of the work of art and invokes the Greek atomist philosophers Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius, who believed that the universe is composed of atoms falling eternally in an infinite void. They believed everything that happens and everything that exists is as a result of the chance collision of such atoms or 'clinamen'. Thus chance and luck are often described in or referred to through terms related to falling. He says that the 'event' the work of art is often presumed to be the result of unforeseeable conditions, that only an event worthy of its name does not denounce itself in advance (ibid.: 349). That is to say, the ambiguity of the consequences of these instantaneous moments invokes the idea of event and the circumstances may be speculated on but not accurately predicted by the spectator. He writes: "The work provokes us to think the event. It challenges us to understand chance and luck, to take sight of them, or take them in hand, to inscribe them within a horizon of anticipation... Works befall us; they say or unveil what befalls us by befalling us" (ibid.: 360-1).

The totality of the experience resulted in the realisation that movement and its withdrawal from the photograph could, conversely, invoke the sense of movement due to the 'creation' of a spatio-temporal dimension. This is something that Manning (2009: 129) proposes, in her exploration of movement. She writes about how 'preceleration' or the thought before movement, opens us to possibilities and that movement has the capacity to create space-time through the 'body-becoming' of movement. Referring to Deleuze's 'movement image', she writes: "A movement-image is no longer the image 'of' something else. Movement no longer foregrounds a

part-object – it transmutes the image. Movement as image reveals force not as a discrete element of form but as its operational envelope. Holding force in abeyance, the image foregrounds its experiential nature.”

Though these images may represent an ‘in-between’, we could also read it as the pre-celeration of a movement that is yet to come. The performer has been ‘wrong-footed’ by the accidental and is about to undergo the act of correcting himself, or may be about to fall over. This ‘opens up’ the possibility of several dimensions, creating the *durée* of the movement-image in the intervals we have not seen and cannot [will not] yet see. The *différance* endlessly defers the consequence through speculation: by packing an arc of movement into one frame, it can be expanded and contracted many times in the process of this speculation, but the fact that it can never be fulfilled invites the imaginative repetition of that citation over and over again. Because the ending does not ‘denounce itself’, ‘the event’ of falling in the instantaneous photograph does not conform to the experience of the determinism of physics that we apply to govern our everyday encounters with objects and space. This, in turn, begins to incite questions of the relationships between body, object and space, and how the manifestations invoke wider questions around the notion of the ‘performative’.

The politics and performatives of falling

There were facets beyond notions of movement and performance emerging in the images. In playing with time, movement and relationality, we implicitly touch on the way in which we play with or deconstruct established citations governed by the body and by the embodiment of such acts. Subsequently, this gives way to a new kind of social, political and ideological notion of performativity in the images – the ‘structural unconsciousness’ to which the citation points towards.

Lepecki (2006) discusses solipsism and the performatives of masculinity through the work of Bruce Nauman and Xavier Leroy. He argues that Nauman actively plays out performative statements in his work: not as a passive slave of these performative commands that plays out the rules of a game but instead purposefully activates a will that aims to ‘destroy’ or re-analyse existing performatives. Lepecki writes:

Choreographic solipsism is a way to dismantle modernity's subjectivisation as a mode of idiotic, self-propelled, autonomous solitude from within. Solipsism becomes a critical and choreographic counter-methodology, a mode to intensify critically and physically the hegemonic conditions of subjectivisation and to explode them in improbable directions.

(Lepecki, 2006: 39)

Lepecki especially emphasises that this choreographic practice is a way of critiquing what he calls the 'modernist male' (white, middle-class, heterosexual, cisgender male). What could be considered subconscious or incidental parts of the composition of the image were, in fact, a way of using this manner of choreographic practice in order to critique modernist notions of masculinity. For example, the suit jacket and the gender-conforming style of dress were being thrown into question by the contorting, awkward movement and exaggerated behaviour, by 'playing' with the objects (in that play can be considered childish and not an 'appropriate' way for a man to behave) and using them in alternative ways that differ from their everyday function.



Figure 2.13 – Scarf Dance

Even the emptiness and ‘blankness’ of the studio space and the method of using my own self became a way of emphasising this reflective form of solipsism. In the repetition of the solitude of falling, the body and presented self is offered to the spectator as a form of critique, comedy and absurdity that isolated these actions from an everyday context to place them under greater scrutiny: literally harsh lights and hard shadows allowing distance to criticise concepts of embodiment and what these ‘citations’ provoke⁷⁶. The ‘role’ that is being assumed by the performer is that of the ‘slapstick body’, as referred to in the writing of Kreider and O’Leary (2015). Here, they explain the fall of the slapstick body as both comic and critical, through which we both understand and emasculate the world:

The slapstick body...

...appears/disappears through the repetition of gesture and effect

...defies gravity

...jerks and pulses

...is laughter and pain in a paradoxical twist

...is existentially at odds with the world

...is the surest way to undermine authority.

(Kreider and O’Leary, 2015: abridged, 47-56)

Therefore the improvisational and subversive usage of objects takes on a significant tone: though the use of the objects may seem ridiculous, they are in fact a disparagement of normativity and the normative way of interacting with the world. A sense of ‘queerness’ begins to creep in, both in the way that it makes the objects and our relations to them strange, as well as in its most gendered terms. Ahmed (2006) explores this idea in *Queer Phenomenology*, explaining why a phenomenology of orientation might be perceived in these images. She suggests that beyond a term to describe sexuality, ‘orientation’ is a word we use to mean ‘directed towards’, so when we discuss orientation we are not only talking of sexual preference, but of finding our way, of registering our proximity to objects and to others. ‘Being oriented’ is a normative state: a state we often do not notice because it is our usual way of being. In becoming

⁷⁶ Illustrated here by figure 2.13 and 2.14, both of which contain exaggerated movements and strange interactions with objects.

oriented we must first be disoriented, and it is in this disorientation the space begins to be queered. In the repetition of falling and failing, the images cite a sense of disorientation with the world as a queer body, by interacting 'queerly' with objects and the space in which body and object inhabit. By being 'upright' we conform to the heteronormative expectations of the world. As soon we start to slip from the normative sense of being upright, we cite the dissatisfaction with the world's involvement (or lack thereof) with our bodies and the space they inhabit. Ahmed writes:

The "upright" body is involved in the world and acts on the world, insofar as it is already involved. The weakening of this involvement is what causes the body to collapse, and to become an object alongside other objects. In simple terms, disorientation involves becoming an object... Disorientation is unevenly distributed: some bodies more than others have their involvement called into crisis. This shows us how the world itself is more "involved" in some bodies than it is in others, as it takes such bodies as the contours of ordinary experience.

(Ahmed, 2006: 159)



Figure 2.14 – Ball Fall

Ahmed defines disorientation as a slip between the proximity of body and object – literally ‘slipping away’ from a normative usage of our environment. Illustrated by the performances in these photographs, the images subsequently emanate a sense of social disorientation. This vague definition of ‘social’ is based on fragile and tense performatives we unwittingly rehearse and conform to. The citation present in the photograph ‘slips away’ from the normative dialogue between body and object to produce another equally fragile situation at the point of collapse, questioning at what point do the performatives on which we have based our daily lives on also fall down. The minimalism of the studio removes the performer from the context of the world and its [lack of] involvement in the body in order to exploit the absurdity of these citations. What happens when we use a stool – an object we expect to support, prop up and maintain posture – becomes the central point of our collapse? What happens when an umbrella, an object of protection, becomes a catalyst for our downfall? Are these objects deliberately set up as instigators of our own continuing failure? Are we over-reliant on our relationship with these transitional phenomena to maintain a sense of safety in our lives? Though the images do not answer these questions, they pose a reasonable amount of uncertainty on more traditional senses of body-object relationship, both in the phenomenological sense and in Winnicott’s sense of transition, and it is only through these acts of transition that we can develop through restoring the experience. In falling, the shared sense of bodily disorientation in performer and spectator demands both to be restored to a sense of orientation. And it is in this process the provocation for the concept of enactment emerges: the ‘healing’ of the *punctum* that facilitates a relationship with the image.

The falling man: 9/11 and the male body

These images of the male body falling in modern visual culture incidentally start to invoke *The Falling Man* – the famous image captured by Associated Press photographer Richard Drew of a man falling from the North Tower of the World Trade Centre⁷⁷. There has been a huge shift in contemporary imagery since the advent of 9/11 and now the image of a falling male body is overshadowed by – and become representative of – the crisis of the West itself. It may, metaphorically, be seen as a huge leap and yet so powerful has the image become in relation to

⁷⁷ The photograph initially appeared in newspapers around the world, including on page 7 of The New York Times on September 12, 2001.

our understanding of present-day culture that both Phelan (2010) and Taylor (2003)⁷⁸ discuss this event in relation to the documentation of its 'event'. More specifically, Walsh (2010: 11-12) picks up on the crisis specifically relating to how the male body can perform such conditions, asking us to read the male body as a 'social synecdoche' that marks the limits of hegemonic norms. He writes that: "the turning of the 21st century has coincided with great anxiety in the West, marked by increased concerns over the penetrability and violability of masculine Euro-American borders." This relationality also ripples further, 'opening up' the text of the male body⁷⁹ and yet simultaneously condenses it into a single photographic frame.

All of the acts present in the images contain some act of falling and slippage that allude to the idea of 'the falling man' and all he has come to represent in the post-9/11 world. The representation of the male body falling was taken further to explore this relationship and make overt the links between the practice of me falling with objects and as a falling body, evidenced in figure 2.15 and 2.16 (the latter created by composite), much like Yves Klein's *Leap Into the Void*. Jumping horizontally across the space repeatedly – sometimes looking helpless, sometimes more composed and elegant – the results of a horizontal leap in the resulting image engages with the world and its physical laws in a relatively normative way.

⁷⁸ Taylor references that for those who failed to fit comfortably into the position of hero or victim in the official 9/11 narrative popularised on TV and in the press, taking photographs offered them an opportunity to "do something" (Taylor, 2003: 243-244). Phelan (2010: 60-61) refers to the beautiful and consoling nature of the photograph, claiming it "reframes his life... simultaneously haunting and recuperating".

⁷⁹ This is a reference to Derrida (2004: 154) in *Dissemination*, where he talks about the male body in these terms, stating it is 'an animal disobedient to reason'. Ironically, this implicitly suggests the ultimate 'pharmakon' disturbing the stature of masculinity is, precisely, the male body itself, which is perhaps why 'performing through' and 'performing as' male is a subversive way to question its own 'authority'.



Figure 2.15 – ‘Jumping’ across the studio

Turned vertically in figure 2.16, the sleep-like composition and suspension starts to echo the fascination of Drew's iconic image. The unintentionally choreographic poses echo previous commentary around *The Falling Man*. For example, Munteán (2013: 108) describes that the illusion of the acrobatic pose counterpoints the 'gruesome death' that the image foreshadows and "the same discrepancy between what I read into the man's body as a gymnastic performance and his inevitable death uncannily morphs into a uncomfortable connection between the two... [the viewer is compelled] to imagine the 'sacrilegious' decision that renders his fall a result of a voluntary act."



Figure 2.16 – *Falling, Indefinitely*

What is most compelling is that it appears to be controlled. Yet somehow, if the performer is *choosing to fall* and has no control over it, he is rendered into a choreographic practice that blends bodily contortion with the potential of imaginative possibility. As the ambiguous falling man fell, his body twisted into what was perceived to be intentional shapes, both disturbing and mesmerising in the way it seemed so planned. Mauro (2011: 589) describes this as: "The falling figure literally and figuratively falls into abstraction, theory and the trauma of disrupted reference. By enacting a function of a conscious perpetual system, a theorisation of trauma tends to render abstract and figuratively that which was once too shocking."

The abstraction of this traumatic history into more artistic representations, such as the images in this chapter, allows the 'reader' to face such trauma head on – but also permits a kind of freedom in reference. Just as puppets of gravity 'free fall', so too can the artist, unrestrained and unrestricted from linguistic constraints in the post 9/11 world. But though jumps and leaps have a sense of liberty, they are also mixed with restriction. It seems we are always jumping, leaping or falling 'within parameters', for whether we 'actively jump' or 'passively fall', the performance of such an action is constrained by the laws of physics. These laws, however, are suspended on transcription to the photographic image.

Conclusion: the performativity of the male body in (non)motion

The theme of falling – falling objects, falling men, falling [failing] masculinity – is presented as a ‘queering’ of space and the results from the photographic experiments as ‘instantaneous’ moments. The chaotic, random and non-normative way of engaging with the world is, however, balanced by a more metaphysical and generally applicable element of which we often live in ignorance. Though falls have plagued human legend as the descent to despair, like the biblical fallen angel Lucifer or the fall of man from the Garden of Eden, they have also been entrenched into acts of natural law.

In referencing *The Falling Man* and the act of falling, as Taylor, Phelan and Walsh have done previously, we might argue that it points towards “the problem with reference” – something Caruth (1996) details. When the apple ‘fell’ on his head, Isaac Newton realised that we are all falling, all the time with the force of gravity pulling us towards the Earth’s core. So perhaps the ‘queer’ notion of spatial disorientation I have outlined that happens in capturing these images is illustrative of a special case of something that is always happening – perhaps a truth that is too traumatic for us to recognise, to be reminded of and of which to be conscious. Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological sense of spatial relations helps us to understand how we walk and simultaneously fall all the time. When we sit on a chair, we fall towards it. But the rendering of falling into ‘the civil imagination’ has gained so many negative connotations that to contemplate the idea we are in a constant mode of falling may be too much for the psyche to take. The related problem, Caruth speculates, is not simply confronting the science behind falling but confronting the fact that there are, perhaps, no words to refer to such a moment. Granted, many of us survive our perpetual moments of falling perfectly well. But the figure of the falling man emphasises “an example of the occurrence of difference: the difference between living and dying – which resists being generalised into a conceptual figure or law” (Caruth, 1996: 89).

The performer falls and, in Derrida’s terms, it ‘befalls’ the spectator in the work itself, creating the dialogue of enactment in the performance act. The doing of the *différance* endlessly defers the fall and, in this way, the performer sets the stage for the spectator to approach the trauma of falling: that gravity poses its own risk to everyone all the time and by remaining upright we are pushing against this force, to which we could succumb at any time. Slicing the precise moment when our normative engagement with space and objects becomes ‘queered’ the shutter captures the submission to this threat and the piercing nature of this trauma, but through the

invitation of enactment the distance from the performance moment that *différance* is able to provide negotiates gravity's potential danger.

Specifically here, though, it is the willing and continual act of failure as a body queered at the moment it becomes disorientated, captured by the photograph in a still moment of reflection that slows our physical laws down to a manageable speed, allowing us to engage with these questions and the citations that govern our relationship to the world. Halberstam (2011: 121) says that failure is a 'queer art' that reminds us to engage with our own shortcomings and that success, a typically right wing, aggressive and ambitious trait, belongs to the heteronormative: "The concept of practicing failure perhaps prompts us to discover our inner dweeb, to be underachievers, to fall short, to get distracted, to take a detour, to find a limit, to lose our way, to forget, to avoid mastery".

What is highlighted throughout the practical investigations in this chapter is that the performer must invite this sense of failure into the studio to embody a sense of the instantaneous. To be experimental is to embrace the potential of failure and these photographic investigations channel the potential to fail in these photographs to discover that there is – or at least can be – an inherent queerness within our relationships to space, object and body. The references open further through the images illustrating a failure to behave properly, a failure to conform to masculine behaviours and a failure to engage with the world more generally. The essence of the instantaneous performance lies within this failure and the most successful images indicate a moment between the movement's apex and the pinnacle of its collapse, citing the fragility of the laws that govern the physical and cultural world.

Moreover, the images of a man repeatedly falling can be seen as hysterical, tragic, controlled and choreographed simultaneously. Referring to the comments of Pozorski (2014), who highlights the limits of literature to be able to describe *The Falling Man*, she states:

In this figure of the falling man, all three meanings of gravity converge: the force pulling the bodies to the centre of the earth; the place of burial; and the seriousness that brings to mind fatalities... The "problem" of reference is not that any language or word is inadequate to represent the trauma of 9/11, but rather that there is too much language, too many slippages of associations, too many

possibilities for reading and misreading. Meaning is insecurely grasped by, but not beyond the reach of, our words.

(Pozorski, 2014: 24)

Acknowledging there is a wide gap between the very grisly proximity of death in Drew's image of 9/11 and images of me appearing to fall in a photography studio, the *Falling Man* comparison may seem indicate the very 'problem with reference' to which Caruth refers. However, Cesare-Schotzko (2015) points out, that only one image has come to signal the whole event and just as the trauma of 9/11 is embodied within one image, so too might we surmise that images of falling speak for general experience: "Yet this photograph captures the "partial" that becomes the whole. It is a photograph of "just a person falling" and yet, as it stands in for all those jumped *and* for the totality of the event it can never be "just" that." (Cesare-Schotzko, 2015: 17).

If we accept Derrida's proposition of *différance*, then he also means that a citation will start to enter a cycle of deference by which they are constantly defined by 'not that'. And while the images contained in this chapter will never be *The Falling Man*, they are of a man falling. It embeds itself in a cultural map both its similarity and its difference and it is in this cycle of difference and deference that the performance of the falling man becomes performative in the instantaneous image. The preceleration of the image evokes the possibility of what might 'befall' the spectator and what might come after. Yet it is already too early and too late, just as we look at the image of 9/11 and recognise that the man falling in the picture is already dead and yet it appears that there is still time to save him by viewing the image, so we perceive these images as possessing the innate potential to expand in many directions, whilst recognising that the performance that occurred in the studio has already played out to its conclusion. In so doing, we may consider the phenomenological sensation of endlessly falling, endlessly deferring the fall into a circular citation and everlasting action, would be so much less harrowing than consigning the figure in the image to his fate, however 'cheaply' that fate is determined by the spectator (to borrow from Sattig).

It would be reductive to say that *The Falling Man* foreshadows all of this work on instantaneity and the still image. However, it does illustrate the impact of the image on the civil imagination and, in performing the fall, how it can invoke cultural trauma. What Pozorski describes, though, is that perhaps literature [text] has been too over-descriptive, too excessive in its portrayal of

this cultural trauma. Experienced as an image, it says the 'unsayable' while, at the same time, the *différance* of the performed fall and of the deferral between the performance moment and the experience of the photograph cushions the blow. Therefore, there is provocation without retaliation, a pause for reflection without repercussion. Performance becomes a conduit that playfully cites the danger of gravity we are subjected to everyday without putting the spectator at due risk. When, in our everyday lives, one moment moves to the next, perhaps there is no due consideration to this risk as it passes in the blink of an eye as we patch together the series of moments between blinking.

The deconstruction of the instantaneous act of falling into a singular frame allows the spectator to 'read' the image before the man who falls plunges into the unconscious of both our own minds and that of the civil imagination, mapping him back into a series of historical and social contexts in which we might imagine falling, failing, saving, delaying – both in our personal lives and our collective cultural consciousness. When the transition between moments is *withdrawn* in the still image, the performance of the instantaneous becomes performative because it slows movement down to a single frame in order to confront the trauma of the everyday experience of gravity. We are always 'falling within a framework', and that framework is defined both by the physical laws of gravity and by the cultural rules that govern our use of objects. Therefore, what performance 'does' in the still image is queer the normative usage of objects by appearing to defy gravity. Both performer and spectator become disorientated and the state of disorientation demands to be restored through enactment and, in this process, the spectator reconfigures this new performance within their understandings. Whether this fall represents a flight of fantasy for both the spectator and the artist or becomes a more harrowing 'leap into the void', the still image allows us to pause that step into the unknown to be contemplated, reflected and reconfigured within a broader context of understandings and citations.

CHAPTER TWO: PERFORMING FUTURES – AUDIENCES AND INTERVENTIONS

Introduction: from performance intervention to civil imagination

In reflecting on live art's canonised interventions, like Valie Export's *Genital Panik* (1969) and Chris Burden's *Trans-Fixed* (1973), we would not know they had happened unless the now-iconic photographs of the events existed. In these performances, it is not so much the performance itself but its photographic representation that has enabled it to be experienced long after the event. However, the difference in the experience of the performance event and the experience of the photograph has been scrutinised to a lesser extent as the audiences in both cases were incidental, small and occurred outside of traditional performance spaces at limited points in time.

As previously discussed, the intention to document these performances as a photograph is a purposeful choice on behalf of the artist in order to bridge such constraints and therefore needs to be viewed and discussed in this context. Talking specifically of performance art's political and protest value when disseminated 'as document', Clausen (2007: 72, 77) writes "distribution strategies of documentations and ephemera of all sorts have enabled it to be firmly embedded as a symbol of social change in collective cultural memory" and performance serves as an 'ideological index' that the photographs 'make visible the values, norms and structures of daily life', built on the relationship between media and the immediate. Clausen highlights that using photography as a process of distribution for performance interventions is a tactical method on behalf of the artist to become embedded in the civil imagination as an image towards potential change, placing a high level of significance and expectation on the process of spectatorial enactment on the reception of the photograph to understand the totality of the performance and its significant social and political context.

So when an artist makes that choice for the performance to continue as a photograph, it is because the mode of reception changes with it and it is a mode geared towards the anticipation of another spectator viewing it in the future. Photographic spectatorship brings with it the *différance* between event and image reception, and the way in which the performance is viewed 'in liveness' and 'via the image' invariably has its effects.

To understand the difference in how the switch in audience position may affect performativity, in this chapter I investigate how performance becomes performative in the still image when a one-off performance action that takes place in public⁸⁰ is photographed and received as image. I demonstrate that the role of the audience 'in liveness' and 'as image' brings with it different civic responsibilities through the relative indifference of the *emaciated*⁸¹ spectator in liveness and the empowerment of the *emancipated* spectator who views the photograph. Rather than revealing something about the collective relationship between bodies of otherness, landscape and psychogeography, the findings elaborated in the process of making are that the expectations of audiences, publics and their 'role' in witnessing prove to be a more significant variable. By encapsulating a 'life-sized' event into a frame of experience in the photograph, the spectator is freed from the social constraints of expected public behaviour and, with distance from the event, can more seriously consider the political ramifications of what is being demonstrated within the frame. The performer uses performance as a vehicle to become a demonstrative 'dis-identificatory noncitizen'⁸² in a 'nonplace'⁸³ through which, on its reception as a photograph, the public can recognise themselves 'as public' in order to put in motion an interrogation of daily norms to move towards a horizon of the future that is never, and can never be, fully present. The action becomes performative as the initiating force of that change, demonstrating the discourses of power in effect via the still image.

In gearing the performance towards photographic reception, performances of otherness or performance interventions that disrupt normative publics and the *différance* of the photograph share a complementary temporal register. The artist anticipates the image to be received in the future with the desire that the spectator will also 'rescue' the performer and the performance through the act of photographic citizenship, bringing it into the now and carrying it forward to the future. Removing the act from the live experience generates performativity by allowing the spectator to see both public and artist 'in totality' condensed into a single photographic frame,

⁸⁰ I refer to this as an 'intervention' throughout the chapter.

⁸¹ From Read (2013), who plays on Rancière's (2009a) 'emancipated spectator' to suggest spectators who feel weakened or embarrassed when confronted with an immersive or immediate live situation.

⁸² From Muñoz (1999: 25) in which he describes disidentification as "shuffling between production and reception... The hermeneutical performance of decoding mass, high or any other cultural field from the perspective of a minority subject in such a representational hierarchy."

⁸³ From Augé (1995) in which he argues that hypermodernity has created a series of nonplaces such as airports, shopping malls and car parks.

permitting the distance from the event to reflect on the social discourses of power represented within the still image.

Becoming spectacle: a subversive strategy

In mentioning the intervention, one must also draw on Debord's (1995 [1967]) idea of 'the spectacle'. Debord argues that 'authentic social life' has been replaced with its representation and all that once was directly lived has become mere representation" (ibid.: 12 (thesis 17)). Debord argues that the history of social life can be understood as "the decline of being into having, and having into merely appearing." This condition, according to Debord, is the "historical moment at which the commodity completes its colonization of social life."

The spectacle is the inverted image of society in which relations between commodities have supplanted relations between people, in which "passive identification with the spectacle supplants genuine activity" . "The spectacle is not a collection of images," Debord writes, "rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images" (ibid.: 9 (thesis 4)). Historically, it is probably not coincidence that Debord's Marxist analysis of the advancement of capitalist society was concurrent with a reaction from the art world in the form of performance interventions that 'became image'. Entering this idea of spectacle could be viewed as a subversive strategy on behalf of the artist to enter the economy of images, the commodity, as a way of critiquing dominant discourses by entering its structure and exaggerating the different social relationships established in liveness and via the spectacle of the photograph.

This echoes Hall's (1997: 275) idea of 'the spectacle of the Other'⁸⁴ and a kind of activity he calls "a third counter-strategy" to reverse the nature of stereotypes within representation. By locating itself within the complexities and ambivalences of representation itself, it tries to contest the inherent bias of the modernist discourse of capitalism from within. This, he says, works "with the shifting, unstable character of meaning, and enters into a struggle over representation, while acknowledging that since meaning can never be finally fixed, there can never be any final

⁸⁴ Hall says at the very beginning of this chapter that in his writing of *The Spectacle of the Other* "racial and ethnic difference is foregrounded. You should bear in mind, however, that what is said about racial difference could equally be applied in many instances to other dimensions of difference, such as gender, sexuality, class and disability" (pp. 225).

victories” (ibid.)⁸⁵. In this strategy, stereotypes are not avoided, but instead accentuated in order to ‘make it strange’ as an attempt to contest ‘dominant gendered and sexual definitions of difference’ to make it explicit what is hidden about the nature of ‘typing’ and ‘stereotyping’. Spectacle, as Debord describes, blurs the lines between ‘appearance’ and ‘actuality’, and therefore we might propose photography offers the opportunity to open up the political possibilities that affords.

This has been made increasingly possible by photography because of its speedy technological development, in which Moller (2013a: 45) calls the ‘photo-activism’ of digitisation, offering diverse possibilities to turn invisibility of marginalised groups into visibility – what he determines as a prerequisite for political participation: “People, including marginalised people, can become agents of their own image rather than being objects of representations of others. Representation is never neutral; it is never unpolitical”. Whereas before privileges of economy disabled access to the ‘control’ of representation, photography now allows the construction of one’s own representation in order to enter that political dialogue with the previously mediated imagery of the spectacle⁸⁶.

This short explanation of the strategies behind using the photograph as a way to demonstrate the ‘spectacle of queerness’ in the performance intervention foregrounds some of the choices behind the method of this chapter as well as giving some insight into why this might have been used as a method in the past. If we accept Debord’s supposition is correct, that commodification of imagery has now replaced our experience of society, we can use Hall’s ideas of counter-strategies of the spectacles of otherness to enter the politics of representation via that imagery to interrogate it from within. In exaggerating queerness, queer identity and sexuality, the attempt

⁸⁵ He continues: “Instead of avoiding the black body, because it has been so caught up in the complexities of power and subordination within representation, this strategy positively takes the body as the principal site of its representational strategies, attempting to make the stereotypes work against themselves. Instead of avoiding the dangerous terrain opened up by the interweaving of ‘race’, gender and sexuality, it deliberately contests the dominant gendered and sexual definitions of racial difference by working on black sexuality. Since black people have so often been fixed, stereotypically, by the racialized gaze, it may have been tempting to refuse the complex emotions associated with ‘looking’. However, this strategy makes elaborate play with ‘looking’, hoping by its very attention, to ‘make it strange’ - that is, to de-familiarize it, and so make explicit what is often hidden – its erotic dimensions. It is not afraid to deploy humour” (pp. 275).

⁸⁶ In that we can suppose at the time of Debord writing photography was less accessible than at the time Moller writes. Therefore, histories of representation have been controlled by dominant establishments to reinforce stereotypes, whereas now (or at least increasingly since Debord), photography has been opened up to groups who previously did not have access, allowing them some control over their own representation in the idea of ‘spectacle’. Moller (2013b: 44-52) later expands on this.

present in the images is to make stereotypes 'work against themselves' and de-familiarise the everyday to question whether it 'holds up' to this critique.

The emaciated versus emancipated spectator: the act of witnessing

The practical investigations throughout this chapter illustrate 'performances' of queerness through gender-blending or quasi-drag actions that operate outside gender norms rather than, for instance, sex performances⁸⁷ as it speaks to Hall's idea of 'exaggerating' stereotypes. At the same time, it addresses one of Butler's (2011 [1993]: 79-149) early assertions that drag 'could be' a political vehicle if it did not adhere to gender binaries. She later revisits this comment in Butler (2004), stating that:

Norms can be significantly deterritorialised through the citation. They can also be exposed as non-natural and non-necessary when they take place in a context and through a form of embodying that defies normative expectation... The point about drag is not simply to produce a pleasurable and subversive spectacle but to allegorise the spectacular and consequential ways in which reality is both reproduced and contested.

(Butler, 2004: 218)

Butler therefore illustrates that 'drag' (and the many shades of queer acts in between) can be utilised as a transgressive strategy to highlight and contest norms while creating a 'subversive spectacle'. Echoed by Kosofosky-Sedgwick (2003: 12), she writes the constant definition of continuity and change through the cycle of repression and liberation leads "in many cases, to its conceptual re-imposition in the even more abstractly reified form of the hegemonic and the subversive. The seeming ethical urgency of such terms masks their gradual evacuation... It is only the middle ranges of agency that offer space for, effectual creativity and change."

On commencing the practice, the starting point was to use the rural landscapes of Cornwall as a way of 'playing against' site. Saltzman (2010: 126) says that "the landscape is an amnesiac that forgets the impressions put upon it" and argues that if site is the place of bodily disappearance,

⁸⁷ In that exaggeration of homosexuality could also be illustrated by sexual acts, with same-sex preference being highlighted as the dominant theme.

then the photograph is that which remembers, echoing Ana Mendieta's *Earth-Body* performances (1972-1985). It was this conflict that she presents that started a series of images around the rural landscape and queer identity, also influenced by Bell and Binnie (2000: 71), who suppose that urban commercialisation characterises the 'citizenship' of queerness, stating, "[urban commercial scenes] represent the most intelligible manifestations of gay culture to the straight onlooker... [these spaces] are misrecognised as representative of all lesbians and gay men as a uniformly affluent and economically privileged group in society serving to deny the material impacts of homophobia and the economic constraints that deny access to those places." In this sense, the 'exaggeration' of queer identity is juxtaposed against the countryside to counter what is seen as the primary perception of queerness as a primarily urban phenomenon against 'landscape as rural'.



Figure 3.1 – (from top left) *Poor, Unsuspecting Cow, Glamping and Angus Og*

A few examples from the series are shown in figure 3.1 and there is little evidence of the presence of an audience in any of the photographs. However, if we look at *Poor, Unsuspecting Cow* there is a non-human audience of cows who, after some time of standing in the field, readily accepted the presence of a man in a playsuit, large summer hat, shades and heels. They had no concept of the social etiquette or 'appropriate' social behaviours of human beings and whether the clothing was cisgendered or not. By keeping the performances of queerness

relatively private, the interventions (and subsequent images) did not pose a challenge to such power plays and mannerisms of human publics and, in order to reach the next stage, the spectacle needed to be more open. Likewise in *Glamping* and *Angus Og*, though there may be a body-landscape relationship, the risk and vulnerability that invites a sense of 'event' is not present. And so it is this concept of the *différance* of the audience temporalities that came to the fore. In order to emphasise the potential cultural relationships, it became clear that the mass-mobilisation of such politics goes hand in hand with the way in which their publics enforce them. If the intervention was to be considered a 'spectacle', it had to play with Debord's observations of the difference between public life and the reception/perception of that life when viewed 'as image'.

Acknowledging the need to 'go public', Grindstaff (2006) talks about the blurring of boundaries between public and private gay identity when it comes to citizenship, asking whether queer citizens should work with or 'go against' heteronormative knowledge-power by highlighting the contradictions between the 'rhetorical secret' (for which he uses the example of the closet and coming out as a performative statement) and the contradictions that govern such a speech act. He argues that though society gives the illusion of acceptance, it is done through ignorance and by pushing such performances of sexuality into the private sphere. In the issue of gay marriage, for example (the statement of declaring marriage being another performative in itself), there is the contradiction that it is both a public institution and a private sexual relationship. He writes: "Queer resistance begins by announcing the publicness of sexuality rather than defending homosexuality in zones of privacy... When we limit homosexuality to zones of privacy, we forgo the right to be public" (Grindstaff, 2006: 154).

To play to this idea of more open citations of gender, I started to perform small acts of queer rebellion in more populated spaces, such as in *Appliqué* (figure 3.2), which took the form of a simple application of lipstick in public. The first time this occurred this was in a bar. Choosing a seat in the corner, the action involved simply applying a light covering of face powder and lipstick while pressing the timer on the camera. The action was 'hidden in plain sight', setting the tone for the next series of performances, and the performance ended once the makeup was applied.



Figure 3.2 – Appliqué test shot

For the most part, *Appliqué* remained covert and this secrecy probably added to the feeling that this contravened some kind of unspoken rule, emphasised by the second time the action was performed in public (figure 3.3):



Figure 3.3 – Appliqué

Taking place at a coffee shop in Falmouth, what are not pictured in the frame are people who were passing the window. The action was ‘performed’ to the high street; people would stop and stare, commenting and laughing. In the image we see that there is a table of people in the background for the most part unaware of what is happening. It felt as though there were several ‘audiences’ for this piece: the camera, the people outside and those inside the café with each audience possessing (dis)advantages from their viewpoint. The people outside were shocked, perhaps amused, by this action. The people inside did not want to pay it attention, whilst the camera observed the action throughout. The fourth audience, then, is the spectator of the image and strangely they have the benefit of distance. They neither watch the very brief and secret act of a man applying lipstick, nor do they feel embarrassed to stare at it. In fact, they are invited to.

Counter to Phelan’s (1993: 146) ‘privileging’ of the witness ‘in liveness’⁸⁸, it seems that no one has a full perspective of the action when it is occurring. Except, somehow, the camera seems to take a more advantageous position exposing both the interior scenario and suggesting the

⁸⁸ This her most notable assertion, but Phelan (2004: 575) reiterates the stance of ethics, aesthetics and live witnessing, stating: “The possibility of mutual transformation of both the observer and the performer within the enactment of the live event... is extraordinarily important, because this is the point where the aesthetic meets the ethical.”

action was also 'performed outwards', having a further reach than the coffee shop itself.

The act of 'appliqué' shown in these photographs does not have the full effect of applying a complete face of drag make-up. However, it does 'pierce' what could be perceived to be an otherwise normative presentation of modernist masculinity (e.g. suit and tie, shaved, sensible haircut). Through the simple act of applying one piece of make up, a flash of red colour cutting through what might be seen as an otherwise straight 'disguise', it demonstrates the fragility of normative power systems that seek to repress the underlying force of desire. But more than this, it also demonstrates the fragility of 'masculinity' itself. Moon (2009: 347) talks about this dichotomy as a relationship between the "white dick" that has always been seen as associated with power and control that changes when it is transferred to a homosexual context. It starts to represent a masculinity 'under siege' and that it "makes clearly visible the inconsistencies, contradictions, and inadequacies central to all identities."

It is clear from the reaction to the piece when performed in public, as well as from the visual reception of the image, that this 'pierce through' the very delicate construction of gender identity is keenly felt. Though the act in itself is relatively small, it was still very much perceived as a 'queer' thing to do and for that reason the action starts to take on wider performative citations. If we see it as a man performing the action, it illustrates how constrained and rigid performances of masculinity are: that one step outside of the performance of the masculine slips into the space of queerness. If, however, we see it as a gay man performing this action, then it goes one step beyond and could be seen to cite the delicacy of homonormativity: that 'endorsed' gay behaviour imposed by normative society is easily chipped by the desire it seeks to repress, which the application of the lipstick becomes representative of.

Before commencing these actions, it always took some time to gather the energy and impetus to do it; throughout all of the process discussed, there was always a sense of fear and apprehension. It was as though these actions broke the rules, that there was the capacity to get caught, ridiculed or ostracised for doing such a thing. There were two reasons why this could have occurred. The first is simply that transgressing implicit rules with a social, rather than legal, binding will cause discomfort from others. In some circumstances this elicited anger, negative commentary and in one instance physical ejection from a location. The second could be a somewhat implicit sense of internal shaming of overtly queer behaviours – both from a public and private perspective. Whether this sense of shame was imposed by the public, self-inflicted

or a combination of both, this sense of shame pervaded and often made the investigations present within this chapter the hardest of all to conduct.



Figure 3.4 – Stripper Vicar

As the openness of the interventions increased, though the performance were incidental the framing of the photographs means the images are read *in relation to* the publics and spaces they inhabit, such as in figure 3.4 – *Stripper Vicar*. Though this was a circumstantial brush with a member of the public, the spectator of the photograph may start to ponder on the causal relationship between performer and accidental audience member: is the meeting chance or purposeful? And if purposeful, then it carries with it the connotations of a secret and sexually charged meeting due to the engendered nature of the performer. Secrecy infers shame and the photograph ‘makes public’ what should have been private, inviting the spectator to gaze. If these acts had taken place in private spaces, the image would simply reinforce the privatisation and repression of queer desire. In public, however, the out-of-focus passers-by we see in the background reinforce ‘tolerance through ignorance’. No one looks, stares, gazes at this act because they do not want to acknowledge it and the photograph throws up this inequality by

exposing it to the spectator of the photograph, in turn inviting them to address these imbalances to become evocative of the 'pragmatics of obligation' Azoulay (2008)⁸⁹ discusses.

What comes into play when the photographs begin to be read with the performer-public relationship in mind is a sense of 'double shame' leading to an effect of the 'live witnesses' that Read (2013) refers to as 'the **emaciated** spectator'. Playing on Rancière's notion of the emancipated spectator, Read comments on one student's remark to him that they feel a sense of 'shame' when engaging in participatory or immersive theatre and Read, having a background in community theatre, uses this idea to posit 'community' against 'immunity', where immunity is a reaction to a sense of 'shame' of engagement, stemming from this immunity from involvement: a way in which we might curtail our willingness to enter the contract of performance that stems from within. "Immunity does this by introducing a minute foreign element to the body, whether that be an individual, such as a patient, a community or political body, introducing a fragment of the same pathogen from which it wants to protect itself, and it is this that blocks natural development, and with it the risk of further infection" (Read, 2013: 97).

Though one might predict indifference from a majority of the people present in liveness, it could also be read that what was happening was an act of 'community protection'. As a presence, the performer takes on the role of a 'foreign body' or a 'pathogen' threatening to infect the community with this sense of queerness. As a community, if they ignore or buffer themselves against it with a form of emotional and mental resistance, it will not infect them. This infection could be as simple as acknowledging that the enforced normative dress code that they employ is easily disrupted. Why is it so queer for a man to apply lipstick? Why is it still threatening for a man to wear gender non-conforming dress?

The *différance* afforded by receiving the performance as an image means the spectator is not confined by the social norms that are potentially in effect when in public and, as a consequence, are more free [emancipated] to consider the action in its wider context. Instead of being 'trapped within', they have the option of 'gazing upon' and, rather than experiencing the enormity of life-scale presence, it is 'rescaled' into a digestible snapshot of experience, allowing them to

⁸⁹ As previously discussed, Azoulay (2008: 25) says: "Photographs are constructed like statements (énoncés), the photographic image gains its meaning through mutual (mis)recognition ... Citizenship likewise is gained through recognition". What she means by this is the photograph sets up a contract to the spectator, through its statement, in order to for the spectator to afford the 'noncitizen' a form of photographic 'citizenship'.

consider the intervention literally from a new perspective – a de-centred point of view outside of self in which they can recognise themselves in the image ‘as public’.

What was initially thought to be a site or place-specific investigation became an investigation into ‘publics’ and the citizenship afforded to the individuals of those publics. Publics embody the politics of place, and therefore are read in relation to how one should perform in such places. Keenan (1993: 132-133) describes the idea of ‘public’ as something that cannot be imagined as ‘location’: “The ‘public sphere’ cannot simply be a street or a square, someplace where I go to become an object or instead heroically reassert my subjectivity, some other place out into which I go to ‘intervene’ or ‘act’. If it is anywhere, the public is ‘in’ me, but it is all that is not me in me, not reducible to or containable within ‘me’”.

In this sense, what emerges is the discourse between the questioning of the power of the individual and the relative power of the public in which they operate. What Keenan suggests in the above quote is that the images not only demonstrate the difference between the performer ‘performing a queer spectacle’ and the normative public, but also that the public is a part of the performer and is inescapably read in relation to their place both in and outside of it. In undertaking these investigations, the performer expresses both a desire to be the public, as well as to illustrate that they can *never be* public as there are existing aspects of it that cannot be contained as an individual. Public is not site-specific, but a mobile body that occurs both inside and outside of us.

Shame, secrecy and strategy

Power is clearly an appropriate consideration: not just between performer and public, but also the difference in power between the emaciated spectator of the performance and the emancipated spectator of the image. We could draw on Foucault (1990), who supposes in his repressive hypothesis that we are governed by repression: that taboo images cannot be talked about and, moreover, that the governing of sexuality provides a key linchpin through which dominant power and law can assert itself. However, he also reveals that discourse, while producing and transmitting power, can also undermine and expose it, that “silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions; but they also loosen its holds and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance” (Foucault, 1990: 101). This is one of his key ideas around

reverse discourse that can change dominant power systems⁹⁰.

Secrecy lies at the very core of this power and Taussig (1999) analyses how secrecy is at the core of social formations as that 'which is generally known, but cannot be articulated'. The content is both known and disavowed; both repeated and kept hidden. This simultaneous knowing and unknowing is, for Taussig, the central structuring feature of society. Secrecy is about a longstanding social structure, not a historical and contingent event. In the below example, figure 3.5, it may seem obvious what the performance protests: 100 percent of births equal death. However, heteronormative power relies on reproduction and birth and so the image exposes what is known but not said – a public secret we mostly acknowledge, sometimes talk about, but largely do not question.



Figure 3.5 – Performing ‘public secrets’

Eaglestone (2014) picks up on this, suggesting that ‘testimony’ can only be read in relation to the secrets that the public keep, and that publics are bound as much by what they do not say as what they make explicit. He says, “Unlike shared collective memory, for example, the public

⁹⁰ Foucault goes further to suggest that repression in itself is powerful as it tries to contain desire that cannot be contained. I have used a passing quote from *The History of Sexuality* to demonstrate my point, but equally we could draw on his ideas on ‘governmentality’ (in Foucault, 1991) to highlight the conflict between ‘technologies of power’ and ‘technologies of the self’ and how the interplay present in these images illustrates that dichotomy. A Foucauldian discourse, though, might detract from how we think of the ‘spoken’ and ‘unspoken’ in the images as intrinsically linked to performative speech, with the images uttering, through the act of visualising these discourses, what cannot be said.

secret creates not a community but an 'un-community': the public knowing people binds people together who may not want to be bound together, who really have nothing in common except the secret. It creates a version of a community bound by shame and secrecy.” (Eaglestone, 2014: 81)⁹¹. The next investigation – *Shopping Is A Drag* (figure 3.6) – embodied how public spectacle can be seen both as a threat and an opportunity. Both, however, play on the idea of contagion and immunity as introduced in the idea of the spectator being *emaciated*. Dressed up in the most obvious style of ‘drag’, the pink hair and unnatural colours were purposely selected so that to make transparent the gender play that was in effect. The performance involved nothing more than walking down Woolwich High Street (in SE18) with two full bags of shopping:



Figure 3.6 – *Shopping's A Drag*

For the shoppers of this area, it was a supreme ‘spectacle’. People followed me down the street, but it did not feel as though they were looking for ‘enjoyment’ as instead I sensed hostility – as though this fascination was not just purely because of the vibrant colours and queerness – that could have led to something more threatening. Embodied in the photograph, the colourful contrasts with the mundane. However, even this vibrant character seems to succumb to the

⁹¹ Previously, Kosofosky-Sedgwick (1990: 4) has broached this issue as silence is a kind of ‘speech act’ in itself, writing: “The fact that silence is rendered as pointed and performative as speech... [and] highlights more broadly the fact that ignorance is as potent and as multiple a thing as there is knowledge.”

mundanity. Perhaps, both in the performance and in the photograph, there is an expectation that the performer should perform because they look this way. What is curious here is that there is no reason this action should be remarkable: everyone else on the high street is carrying out similar activities. Nonetheless something disrupts the normativity of the scene.

We might recognise that some of the sense of uncertainty was because there was no implicit 'contract' between performer and audience. Furthermore, and rhetorically, the motivations for staging such actions were questionable. The intervention did not ask for the audience to react or respond to me and there was no expectation of praise or applause when the performer was over. To some extent, there was little intention of the public to recognise it 'as performance'⁹² and so this created uncertainty between public and performer.



Figure 3.7 – 'Executive Realness'

But concealment of such power dynamics through ignorance by 'shutting down' the pathogen infecting the community is appropriate to context, as illustrated in figure 3.7. Taking place beside the Bank of England in London, the men in suits and the comparatively more mundane

⁹² In fact, perhaps just 'as spectacle', which invites gaze and attention without inviting interaction.

colours sported by the women uphold such heteronormative knowledge-power by not paying attention to the spectacle and therefore protecting their own corporate behaviours and sense of dress that discourage individuality. In this experiment, I was largely dismissed and left to take photographs because an acknowledgement of the presence of this queerness 'in liveness' would prompt too many questions in their own minds of why they adhere unreservedly to certain behaviours.

Any 'non-reaction' or ignorance could be read this as 'minding one's own business', after all the alternative would be to have people following me around or staring endlessly. The point here is that the audience were unsure if they should or could do anything because there was no agreed contract to my presence, and as such the response is one of self-preservation and to adhere to the unspoken community 'rules' as no contract with the performer is willingly established. The community remains resolved to be unpenetrated and unweakened by the pathogen of 'the Other', upholding the discourses of power in effect.

On the other hand, we could also see the pathogenic quality of performance as 'catching' because the reactions were not all indifferent and one teenage girl asks if she might take a selfie. She acts as though it is the most surreal thing to ever happen to her in her life:



Figure 3.8 – Teenage girl takes selfie with me in drag

Continuing on the theme of contagion, her response is perhaps why the community might 'close down' such actions. We could then look at the idea of infection in another light, such as the idea of 'infectious laughter' – something we catch that is not unpleasant at all. Hickey-Moody (2016: 538) writes that, "Art escaping the capitalist bleed is future oriented. It values difference. It

makes its people, its subjects, through scrambling capitalist codes in a manifestation of untimeliness that is temporally and spatially modulated... A public is called to attention to witness the power of difference to resonate with the liveness of the project of being different together.”

She writes about an idea of *affective contagion*, a reaction to which we can see from the girl with the selfie. Having never seen such a spectacle in liveness, she wanted to ‘have a piece’ of this pathogen potentially calling to her own attention her limited experience of such actions. This led to her wanting to ‘be involved’, to ‘catch the bug’, which she did in her frame of experience by taking a selfie to show that this had happened to her⁹³. However, even if it was a ‘transient joke’ that might be forgotten by her, it is important to recognise that there is potential here for some individuals within a public to catch the contagion and to do something effective with it on their own terms. This would have to be in the form of an engagement that helped the emaciated spectator broach the ‘secret’ within the frame of their experience, but as the performance was staged *for camera* and not performing for a live audience, negotiations of this contract of involvement were audience-led and this was a purposeful strategy to accentuate the idea of the artist as ‘liberal hero’ exposing the ‘shame of’ society’s secrets. However there is a potential for the pathogen to become contagion and the reason the emaciated spectators ‘shut down’ the hostile pathogen was to prevent that.

Drawing on the line of questioning around intentions for this performance and how eventually it was to be perceived ‘as photograph’ rather than as performance, it became apparent this was part of a purposeful and established strategy seen in, for example, Acconci and other performance interventions prevalent in the 60s and 70s. This tactic relies on the public behaving in this manner and captured by the camera for the public to be ‘rescaled’ by the camera lens to ‘reflect back’ the totality of the situation afforded only by the camera’s unique point of view and mechanic ability to resize such a life-sized event.

As the performance was made for the image, it is almost as though it is performed ‘through’ the camera – that is to say to anticipate an audience beyond the lens, beyond the black box and beyond the eye of the operator. What matters in this instance is the image’s ‘totality’: to perceive

⁹³ There could be a tangential strand of discussion here, in that she wanted to turn the experience into an image of spectacle.

both the performer and public as a detached other, to 'frame' the discourses of difference and the experience of spectacle, vulnerability and indifference that was 'captured' within the frame.

Ward (2014) observes such a strategy by saying:

The manipulation of the scale of the public (as though the public, or the idea of public, had become a medium) may resonate with the manipulations of the scale of objects in pop [art] and minimalism... The enclosure of the public so that it might see itself as such, as if this would necessarily produce a critique of public-formation more generally.

(Ward, 2014: 19)

He articulates that this divisiveness of public/private could be seen as 'escape attempts' on behalf of the artist, insofar as they disarticulate artistic subjectivity from the artist's own presence in the works, which are in turn disallowed from being seen as complete in themselves. The overall effect, he states, is one of 'ironic self-liberation' (ibid.: 22). What we are seeing then is a way of employing performance art's links with minimalism as a form of 'spatial reorganisation' to 'enclose' the public within a single photographic frame in order to demonstrate public as a form of 'me' and 'not-me' – perhaps even a form of public/private relationship *as object*. We could consider this in both a positive and negative light. In an optimistic way, it works towards changing perceptions by displaying this difference or raising questions about why this occurs through proactive challenges to underlying discourses in intentional acts that allow 'the public' to recognise themselves as such, in an environment outside the one that binds them to public social conduct. At worst, we have to question the artist's motivation to position themselves as a conduit of enlightenment, which relies somewhat on perceiving 'public as bad' and 'artist as good' – and this is not always the case. Ultimately I one cannot analyse each individual's reaction and what they thought and felt in the moment. What needs to be recognised is that the artist intends, before executing the action, that it be seen as grating against societal norms and to some extent invoke reactions of indifference, hostility, intrigue, delight or confusion.

By disrupting 'public secrets' without negotiating them with the live audience, the artist is purposefully placed as outside of the community and subjected to their reactions whatever they may be. In liveness, the 'breaking' or 'highlighting' of this secret places the performer at risk and

the community unites to 'protect' themselves from the infectious quality of the contagion that has the potential to be transmitted to others if they see it and seriously consider its consequences on what they know. It sets up a paradigm of 'us and them' to stage a united front. This immunoreponse leaves the spectator weakened [emaciated] and unable to 'act on' any provocation that the intervention may have had, shutting down the questioning of the discourses of power in their own mind. At best, even if spectators did engage, it is a passing thought; one that might easily be dismissed as an act of a 'crazy' nonconforming outsider than something that should be seriously considered as a rupture in the discourses of power. It is potentially only when the spectator is 'emancipated' from the idea of social norms (e.g. how they believe themselves and others should act in public) that they can approach the intervention (predominantly in its photographic form where they are not 'witnessing' the event in liveness).

Emotional rescue



Figure 3.9 – Image from 'The Lost Boy'

However, the idea of artist as portraying this 'ironic self-liberation' does not negate the situation of vulnerability he or she puts themselves in to expose these discourses. Returning to this idea, it is clear that the sense of 'risk' was a contributing factor to these interventions, and that risk is not imaginary nor is it to be undermined. For example, in performing *The Lost Boy* (figure 3.9 and 3.10) in a supermarket in London, I sought to convey innocence by wearing a onesie

recalled something of a child-like nature but on wandering around the aisles, but was met with both derision and hostility. It seemed 'inappropriate' for a man to be dressed in such a manner and yet there was no immediate harm being posed to the public while shopping. The whole action lasted just 30 minutes when I was asked to leave by supermarket security, raising the question of the lines that had been drawn between public and private space. The supermarket is constructed to make the public feel welcome but the company can also enforce the boundaries of privacy when it suits them to stop the 'affective contagion'. Even when walking down the street in this costume, one person in a car wound their windows down and called me 'sad and pathetic' while laughing very loudly.



Figure 3.10 – The Lost Boy

However, there is something about the exposed 'leakiness' of these photographs that ask the spectator to 'bear witness' to the potentials of these aggressions and hostilities, even if they were not present to see or hear them. By performing such acts of queerness, McCormack (2014) describes that central to subject formation is an ontological and existential vulnerability, which is not optional. She states that, "any affective relation to it is variable (it can be sensed by the subject even while it is that which founds the subject).... The question of being can only be thought through one's ethical relation to others" (McCormack, 2014: 34).

In a sense, it becomes a part of the experience to face confront one's own internal shame and experience the public's shame of witnessing me as emaciated spectators to illustrate that 'vulnerability' is not an optional part of the ethics of witnessing. What was starting to occur in the pictures was this sense of 'being alone in crowded places' or a strong sense of isolation. Barthes (1978: 16-17) describes the 'discourse' of such an absence in the romantic sense that is a text composed of two ideograms – "the raised arms of Desire, and there are the wide-open arms of Need". Barthes describes the sense of 'vacillating' between the phallic representation of desire and the 'babyish' image of wide-open arms and this is the kind of 'vacillating' the lover does in absence of love. Love (2009) extends this to describe queer history as 'an education in absence' that teaches homosexuals the lessons of solitude and heartbreak. She suggests that these acts of queer absence ask for a form of 'emotional rescue'.

Applied directly to images like *The Lost Boy*, we might perceive both the underlying, repressed desire of queerness while behaving in a 'boyish' manner that is born of the need similar to that of what Barthes describes as 'babyish'. The performer uses public places or places that are inhabited as an intentional tool to cite the isolation of queer identity. Subsequently, there is a call to action to the spectator to offer comfort and support, to break the tension in the image with laughter or just to recognise the situation; to recognise me. The performer 'vacillates', but so does the spectator. They hope that in doing something 'now' they are viewing the photograph, they can counteract the *différance* between the act, its transcription and the photographic moment – perhaps even compensate for the emotional absence the image represents. We could also refer back to Mitchell (2005: 33) and say the image's desire and need somehow links with the performer's desire and need. The performer desires to be seen as being isolated, for the loneliness to be recognised, and the image occupies that desire through its desire to be seen. Likewise, the performer needs the emotional support of the spectator, even if they were not present, just as the image needs a medium through which to exist. The image channels both its need and the performer's, to which it is hoped the spectator responds through a comforting act of emotional rescue. This act placates the piercing nature of the isolation, perhaps even the guilt of not being able to be present, through an act of performative empathy. Desire becomes the historiographical way of writing the act into the present. Emotional rescue becomes the bridge between the performance moment and the photograph.

A partial agent of this disruption is the idea of 'temporal drag', as detailed by Freeman (2010:

63)⁹⁴. Referencing the work of Cindy Sherman, Sherry Levine and Barbara Kruger, she posits the idea that temporal drag could be a way of connecting queer performativity to disavowed political histories. She writes: “Might some bodies, by registering on their very surface the co-presence of several historically contingent events, social movements and/or collective pleasures, complicate or displace the centrality of gender-transitive drag to queer performativity theory? Might they articulate instead a kind of temporal transitivity that does not leave feminism, femininity, or so-called anachronisms behind?”.

The idea of ‘temporal transitivity’ embodied by the notion of temporal drag resonates not only with the performance of these identities, but also with the notion of the photograph. The insertion of a reauthored context of these spaces, ‘rewritten’ by this ‘drag’, forces speculation by embodying the politics of both identity and of public space. And though Freeman refers to the anachronisms of feminism, it could also analogise a relationship with homonormativity, acceptability and the limits of etiquette. In this sense, by performing queer, boyish or playful gender identities, what is actually being read across the body are the ‘disavowed histories’ of queerness [otherness].

The feeling of placelessness

In doing so, we loop back to Debord (1967) and Hall (1997) and how even if we classify this kind of document as ‘representation’, then representation is still inherently a form of witness. Blocker (2009) marks out that images of this kind so desperately wish to inhabit the event ‘as was’, but instead is caught between its own absence and its emotional consequences on the viewer. She writes:

Representation (and by implication, witnessing) is the opposite of the real, and yet, at the same time, contradictorily, representations are real and have very real effects. This is a troubling problem, particularly since the act of witnessing, even more forcefully than the act of representing, makes very specific claims on reality.

⁹⁴ Schneider (2011: 176) picks up on Freeman’s term, to propose that “camp history drags the past into the present and across its differences asking for time-again witnesses to [see] moments not yet past and not present either”. The following account in the conclusion of this chapter expands this idea of a complementary photographic/queer register.

As a complement to this, Best (2016: 191) describes how this kind of witnessing and the act of 'emotional rescue' could best be detailed as 'reparation', which she says, "does not make whole again, it incorporates the damaged and the contaminated [to invoke] the ambivalence of the contaminated position." In this sense, the artist plays with the idea of *différance* knowing that there is little that can be done to physically rescue by the spectator of the photograph, whatever they might feel about the images and the effect they have. However, one of the only things they can do is try to bridge the gap in this emotional rescue act of reparation, in some sense atoning for and 'bearing witness to' the isolation and vulnerability of the performer.

'Temporal drag' can highlight the transience of the 'identity play' in itself due to the shifting nature of the costume. Nonetheless, somehow this transience also seemed to seep through to this sense of place. For example, if we look at *Shopping's a Drag* (figure 3.6), the surroundings are particularly unremarkable: it could be any high street anywhere in the country. Similarly with *The Lost Boy* (figure 3.9), occurring in a supermarket, the significance of the images lies not so much in the fact that they take place in a specific site, but more that the place becomes illustrative of any similar or like place⁹⁵. Relph (1977: 141) describes this notion as 'placelessness': a detachment from the particularity of places where human-made landscapes lack distinctiveness and have little connection with their geographical context. He writes that our relationships with place are "necessary, varied and just as unpleasant as our relationships with other people". He goes on to elaborate that urbanisation has eroded our sense of place, leading to a sense of 'placelessness' that, on an individual level, is experienced by outsiders or refugees. Revisiting his concept of placelessness, Relph (2016: 26) says that we have entered a paradox of place, that "the distinctive identity of somewhere requires an understanding of its similarity with elsewhere". Whether consciously or subconsciously, the locations present in the images were temporary in themselves and emanate a sense of déjà-vu for the spectator. These gender performances were not site-specific, but illustrative demonstrations that would be recognisable to the spectator as a relatable place they could imagine in any similar context.

Congruent with this notion is Augé's sense of 'non-place' (1995: 78). He describes 'non-places' as created by supermodernity, such as shopping malls, airports and hotel rooms: transient

⁹⁵ It is also illustrated in figure 3.11 below, which took place on a DLR train between stations. Though the train itself is not a place it becomes representative of being 'between places': somehow always transient and never here nor there.

places that we are always just 'passing through'. He writes: "[If one describes place] as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place. The hypothesis advanced here is that supermodernity produces non-places."



Figure 3.11 – This Must Be the (Non) Place

Questions start to arise about the place for queer identity, especially those identities that fall outside the normative perception of LGBT+ identity. By occupying non-places, the investigations test to what extent they could be considered a 'non-place'. Augé says above that non-places are not concerned with identity, but the findings of these interventions suggest that there is an implicit set of operational 'rules' that govern acceptable behaviour and identity in these spaces. I am not necessarily proposing the feasibility of the existence of non-place, but instead interrogating the 'place' of queerness. If queer identity cannot exist in a location designated as a so-called 'non-place', a place said not to be concerned with such things, then does queerness have a 'place' at all? Or, perhaps, in an increasingly 'indistinct' world that is becoming gentrified and placeless, performances of queer identity represent a challenge of individuality to homogenised places that could be considered 'counter-progressive' and reactive to progress. This supposition could be furthered by asking ourselves if progress lies in the advancement of 'supermodernity' or whether it lies in the integration of many individual identities into everyday

spaces. But it is clear that 'places' and the collective behaviour of 'publics' therein become a part of this dilemma.

But more so, it gives way to a common feeling of 'placelessness' that is general to human experience. The feeling of being alone in crowded places, of feeling that one stands out from the crowd in a bad or embarrassing way, of 'wearing one's shame'. By taking on the role of the Other, it illustrates that at times we can all become that person who feels as though they do not belong.

Conclusion: performing futures

In a critique and analysis of queer theory, Green (2007: 35) questions the 'deconstructionist' approach of, for example, Butler in that the 'performative interval' cannot be maintained. This interval is the distance between the doing (e.g. doing 'queer') and identity (e.g. the performer's interior semblance of self) and to 'perform' it creates a category and then in turn a new stable category or normalising regime, which queerness is said to resist. He calls the deconstructive moment 'unsustainable', but this is why the photograph becomes an ideal medium for these queer interventions. We could refer to this interval as the 'theatrical break' between the 'doing' [performing] of identity and the more stable, fixed interior semblance of self that has nothing to do with exterior presentation or appearance.

As previously discussed, the images themselves represent a transient moment, simultaneously a document and artefact of 'placelessness'; a lack of 'belonging' for queer identity that the photograph has removed from its time and place specificity. And while the 'temporal drag' in its most literal sense of 'dressing temporarily' as Freeman describes and in the traction which Schneider details points towards that which 'has already happened', it simultaneously directs us to 'what is happening now'. The 'deconstructive moment' of the intervention may ultimately be unsustainable but the photographic transcription captures the citation and delays the intervention from becoming a 'mere moment'. In photographic form, the citation becomes continuous, allowing space for reflection and consideration in its sustained iteration.

Also considering Muñoz (2009) and his idea of queer futurity, it can be read that performances of queerness are, in fact, a performance of a 'then and there' that is yet to pass. Queerness is a point in the distance that as we head towards we never quite reach, as there is always

something beyond. He writes: “We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an identity that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future” (Muñoz, 2009: 1-5). A performance of queer identity, for Muñoz, signals not a ‘disappearance’ (the politics to which Phelan rested on decades ago), but instead signifies its own return. Queerness, especially in photographic form, does not ‘disappear’, but instead constantly tries to inhabit its own future incarnation. Muñoz later goes on to detail that ‘even nightclubs shut eventually’ (ibid.: 28), but the photographic moment can never ‘shut’ and this has its advantage. So if the photograph is geared towards future reception and queerness is inherently a performance of the future, it seems that the queer spectacle is best understood as a ‘then and there’ that the photograph is able to present.

Kosofosky-Sedgwick (2003: 6, 12) describes performativity as a ‘process of becoming’ and if we accept that performativity is a process and Muñoz’s assertion of queer futurity then these photographic citations are an initiation of that process. The performance acts as the initiator and photograph asserts the citation enforcing itself until it ‘becomes’ as though it were, as though it is and as though it will be. Then the images are part of their own becoming: a longing for a future where these practices are no longer seen as strange or an interruption of a dominant discourse, they both invoke change and normalise their existence. The photographic performances occur in an ‘elsewhere’ the spectator may recognise but has not visited and does not know, yet feels as though they may have. The distance – or *différance* – becomes an integral part of allowing the spectator space to consider the importance of these actions and calls on them to question why they are strange but also emancipates them to gaze at the spectacle of the queer and consider its relationship to the mainstream with a level of distance. The camera’s unique perspective challenges the ontological ‘privileging’ of the witness: the reactions gained in public (or ‘in liveness’) were mixed; curious at best though more commonly ignorant and negative, while the photograph seems mildly humorous and an absurdist contradiction to the goings on around the subject.

It is this absurdism and ‘strangeness’ of the performance of queer identity present in the photographic images that adds to the performative effect. Critchley (2002: 95) identifies this as the ‘*risus purus*’, which he deems is ‘the highest laugh’: the laugh that questions why it is laughing is perhaps the most valuable. While I am not declaring these images have ‘laugh out loud’ comedy value, the subtle subversions and the performances undermining the discourse of

dominant authority makes one ponder about the underlying ridiculousness of the implicit constructed norms of each situation in the photographs that some unquestioningly submit to.

So what is it the performance is doing in the photograph in terms of performativity? We could conclude that these images bring about a two-way discourse in our relationship with normativity. Firstly, it initiates a visual conversation about our relationship with queer identity and the everyday, and whether that identity could be assimilated into it. If not, then does queerness have a space in the public sphere? Should that space be created? By whom? Secondly, it points out the fragility of the constructs that make up everyday life and in that sense it starts to raise questions about the feasibility of those norms, how they are perpetuated, if they should be, why and, again, by whom. Performatively, they act as a provocation to the spectator that not only socially reconfigures their relationship to 'otherness', but also how they could change their own relationship to everyday spaces and the politics that govern them and whether or not the politics of those places stand up to scrutiny when they, quite literally, have a lens held up to them to recognise the mass mobilisation of such politics 'as publics'. Queer identity, then, becomes a vehicle for the action that uses the citations of gender politics to enact a wider inclusive 'doing' that works towards a society of the future: one of tolerance through celebration and acceptance through an interrogated discourse of norms. But more than inclusivity, it examines the origin of normative values and disrupts their perpetuation, asking the spectator where they stand on upholding or deconstructing the citations that hold normativity together and revealing something of the 'secrets' that publics unwittingly adhere to.

It seems performances of otherness (in this instance, queerness) and the photograph share a complementary temporal register⁹⁶. This transcription utilises photography's indexical power to depict it has been, its performative power to make it happen now to the spectator and simultaneously it displays what could be. Therefore, not only do the photographs have a quality of lived experience, they also leave room to consider the more imaginary aspects both within and outside the frame. The 'placelessness' of the images and of the queerness within adds to this effect of the 'paradox of place': it could be occurring anywhere at any time, transcending its value as a time-and-place-specific document into a demonstrative action that is illustrative of a number of general discourses of power in effect and how they can be disrupted. The photograph rescues this intervention from a brief passing in time and allows it to be disseminated further in the hope that the spectator will also 'rescue' the performer and the

⁹⁶ Halberstam (2005:5) refers to this as 'queer time', with its counterpart being 'chromonormativity'.

performance through the act of photographic citizenship, bringing it into the now and carrying it forward into the future. However, all registers become equally important: that it did happen, to lend the document a level of circumstantial gravitas; that it is happening, to give it relevance to the spectator; and that it will happen, to act as a provocation for future change and to signal its own return.

Différance and the deferral of the performance on its transcription to the photograph becomes an intentional strategy for the artist. Knowing that the camera is able to 'resize' and 'reframe' the public into a frame of experience, they position themselves as the agent of change and ask the spectator to recognise the difference between the artist and 'public'; that which is contained within the artist and everything that cannot be. By undertaking such an act, they intentionally display their vulnerability and use its effect on photographic reception to reinforce the fact that they are asked to 'bear witness' to the imbalance. The focus shifts onto what can be done now, whether that is an emotional act of reparation, a deeper interrogation of society's 'secrets' or a proactive political act that addresses the imbalance. Only when the audience can see 'the bigger picture' is the performance then embedded within both the temporal context of the moment it occurred and the respective social contexts that the spectator can consider in the 'now' it is viewed, revealing the underlying performative iterations of the performance itself and what it has the power 'to do'.

The images discussed in this chapter have a dual functionality, as they could both be considered as performance documentation and as artefacts in their own right. But whether they are either (or both, or neither), this chapter renders something different onto this exploration of performance to camera. On some occasions and in certain acts 'in liveness', community solidifies in an act of immunity towards a 'foreign body', therefore disempowering them from considering this rupture as a meaningful intervention on discourses of power. The 'civil contract' with the audience that Azoulay (2008)⁹⁷ describes is, therefore, not in effect in liveness. In other words, the audience have very little obligation towards me when the artist is present in public space. It only comes into being when the performance is received in its photographic form. This account sheds light on why the photographic transcription of such interventions, both in live art's

⁹⁷ There is more detail in relation to Azoulay's (2008: 16) idea of 'contract' within photography on pp. 17-18 of this thesis. What could be taken from referencing it here is that Azoulay details the idea of 'photographic citizenship' and the presence of the 'other' illustrates the imbalance of power between 'citizens' and 'noncitizens'. The spectator, therefore, addresses this inequality through what she calls 'the civil contract', but this is done through viewing the image rather than viewing the act.

history and of interventions to come, could be necessary to disseminate a wider, and much needed, discourse on the power relations in effect.

CHAPTER THREE: REPETITION, CITATION, ITERATION, DECONSTRUCTION

Introduction: performed citations and their photographic iteration

One of the ideas introduced in the contextual review is that of repetition: how the photograph repeats itself visually, how performance 'repeats' citation and how citation is in itself a repetition of a preceding statement or iteration. Also indicated was that perhaps one of the tensions between live art and photography lies in the idea that live art aims to break with convention and prizes its 'unrepeatability' as something core to its ethos. However, performance and photography both have a similar quality of that repetition: the photograph repeats the utterance it portrays and becomes different every time it is seen. Likewise, each individual performance of a citation is different from the preceding one, inviting change and evolving with each unique act. In this chapter, I revisit various ideas around repetition and (un)repeatability in the still image, and the 'doing' that occurs on its visual reception as a photograph. Not only does this involve the repetition of acts or instructions, but also the repetition of the performance itself every time it is viewed as a photographic image. In analysing this variable, we see how performance 'cites' in an attempt to re-play and re-evaluate existing conventions or cultural references, calling to attention the impossibility of finding the 'original' referent or citation through various acts of repetition. Received photographically, it replays and repeats itself causing temporal tensions between the performance created to be viewed in the future, the present moment in which the photograph is viewed and the way in which the citation relies on the spectator's past understandings to be understood and reconfigured.

Each iteration [viewing] of its photographic reception puts the performance act 'under erasure' through its return, making the transcription of the performance as a photographic phrase a deconstructive act that exposes the trace, while simultaneously demonstrating the impossibility of finding the origin of the citation. The images of the performance become performative by revealing that the act of citation relies on a mutual understanding between artist and spectator, and this understanding can easily be 'undone' by the visual demonstration of such performed citations in the photograph. This prompts the spectator to revisit truisms and accepted references in language and popular culture to see if they still 'hold up' to their own sense of internal logic.

‘Sous rature’: the ‘undoing’ of the sentence-image

If we accept Derrida’s proposition that iterability is a structural characteristic of every mark and to iterate such a mark is in some sense to repeat it, then what we have previously come to think of as ‘re-enactments’ or ‘re-performances’ – either of a set of circumstances or of canonical works – could actually be considered as ‘citation’. By repeating or imitating the citation, the artist indicates a desire to reveal the mark of the citation, as citations do not only state but they infer and refer. But contrary to this, it is acknowledged that deviation happens within repetition, making no two iterations exactly alike. In re-iterating, we open up that citation for analysis when the image reveals what the ‘new body’ can bring to such statements.

Deleuze (2009 [1968]: 164-165) divides repetition into two categories: ‘naked’ and ‘clothed’ repetition. Naked repetition suggests a brute, mechanical nature in which something is ‘repeated exactly’: something we may infer that Warhol was interested in experimenting with in his silk-screens and even in some of his experiments with photography. Clothed repetition, though, is ‘repetition with addition’, in that repeating a citation also comes to ‘add something to it’. Citation as a form of repetition masks its own origins by inviting reiteration and deviation through clothed repetition and, arguably, it is possible that with each viewing of a singular image has an element of this. Simultaneously, we can extend this definition to the idea of an artist calling upon a shared visual consciousness when they cite or reference other images that have entered the canon such as Marina Abramovic citing seven famed performance works in *Seven Easy Pieces* (2005) or Yasumasa Morimura’s citations of important images and events in his re-enacted works^{98 99}. We can also narrow it down to citing common cultural understandings between the artist and spectator, like calling upon nuances of language and their instructional capacity. Connor (1988: 3) describes how, in Western culture, repetition is conventionally

⁹⁸ See, for example, his series of self-portraits styled after Hollywood stars (1996).

⁹⁹ I acknowledge that there is a certain amount of confluence within the definitions of re-enacting and citation. The reason it is not defined as ‘re-enactment’ is because the terminology carries with it the notions of ‘original’ and ‘copy’. However, if we instead apply the terminology of ‘citation’ what we are inferring is that there is no original because the origin, in itself, would be difficult to determine. Citational practice embodies this notion of ‘adding to’ rather than aiming to ‘copy directly’ and that calling upon citation is meant to be a shared understanding between artist and spectator, but each iteration brings with it the capacity to see the citation from a different perspective. Kierkegaard (2009 [1841]: 131) believed that “repetition and recollection are the same movement, except in opposite directions, for what is recollected has been, is repeated backward”. Therefore in this chapter I focus on repetition and citation. Where the word ‘re-enactment’ has been used in this chapter, it is under direct quotation from other authors who are describing a phenomenon similar to the one detailed in the chapter following.

condemned as parasitic, threatening and negative and represents this dilemma: "How can you have repetition without an original?' brings with it the less obvious question 'How can you have an original which it would be impossible to represent or duplicate?'"

The following account takes a broad overview of citation and repetition in the still image: from repeating phrases or actions to looking at acts that call upon or 'cite' well known artworks from popular visual culture, this varied perspective is designed to apply both to simple repetitions of citation and to acts that are directly referential to other works of art. The discussion concludes that repetition of any given act invites us to review what we previously knew in light of the knowledge the photographic iteration brings, while simultaneously reminding us that returning to certain acts – even within the image's own loop – is a process that has no definitive ending.

Unlike the chapter on the instantaneous, where an unrepeatable single image of a repeated performance action was chosen above others, the investigations present here use multiple images to illustrate the unrepeatability of a given performance act and give the impression of a repeated photographic iteration. The initial investigation into this, entitled '*Self Storage*' (figure 4.1), uses an instruction as a command as a repetitive act that can never be completed. The command for the act itself came from the side of the box, which is clearly labelled as a 'self-storage box'. In this act, the performer attempts to be 'stored' inside the package, but the box is evidently too small so the act is set up as an impossible and recurring task that may be undertaken endlessly and to exhaustion.



Figure 4.1 – Self-Storage

In isolation, the first image does not in itself illustrate storing oneself as a ‘task’. Instead, it opens up many different interpretations as to why this task might be performed or in aid of what (searching, storing, falling). In sequence, it illustrates the task is a futile one and that, even in its repetition, there is no ‘perfect’ execution of the task. Contrasted with the findings from the previous chapter on the instantaneous¹⁰⁰, which singled out one image over tens or hundreds of other executions of the action to play on the notion of *durée*, the repetitious nature or single-minded objective of the tasks juxtaposed against the individuality of the many potential outcomes became somewhat of a defining feature. This is also seen in the series *Camera Ready* (figure 4.2, below) in which the act of applying make-up is transformed into something ugly and grotesque as lipstick and eye shadow is applied and taken off over and over, with the title implying a final effect of a flawless ‘camera ready’ finish. Through sequence, it exposes the

¹⁰⁰pp. 67-98 of this thesis.

time and process investment for this effect to appear, one that is filled with ridiculous actions, affected funny faces and questionable practices. The sequential nature of the series intentionally highlights the absurdity of the practice, emphasised by the fact that the artist never quite achieves the full flourish, the bar set even higher by the artist's gender:



Figure 4.2 – Camera Ready

The idea of displaying the photographs in this manner in order to show repetition, failure and repeated failure recalls Heidegger's concept of *sous rature*, later adopted and developed by Derrida. Meaning 'under erasure', it was originally a technique of crossing out words (placing them under erasure) to show that the word is both inaccurate in its description, but necessary. Derrida then evolved his use of *sous rature* when words are not actually written and printed with erasing lines, but are still spoken of as 'being erased' by other strategies of deconstruction (see,

for example, Derrida, 1976: 60)¹⁰¹. Certain words are qualified as being used *sous rature*, which implies the same sense that the word is 'inaccurate and yet necessary to say' and, therefore, the technique becomes used as a metaphor. In the same way, each attempt apparent in the above images is inaccurate in its execution and yet somehow seems necessary in order to illustrate the labour of the task required, as well as its complexity and indefinite recurrence.

In both cases, the idea of the impossibility of the task seems to open up its many potentialities as the act, if continually repeated, cannot 'end'. The artist could never store himself inside the box, neither will he be ready for camera in the second sequence if he continues to apply make up. By opening up these sequences, it forces the spectator to replay the loop in order to play out the various consequences. As the task is set up to for the performer fail, so is the act of searching for finitude in the sequence.

The idea of 'scoring' them in this manner becomes part of the image's 'syntax' and we could, in Rancière's (2009b) terms call this photographic 'parataxis', reinforced by their sequential display. He describes the sentence-image as one that goes beyond a structuralist idea of sentence creation in a visual form to become a device that plays on the relationship between the said and the unsaid that 'undoes' the representative relationship between text and image, where the image plays an active, disruptive power he describes as a 'change of regime between two sensory orders':

As sentence, it accommodates paratactic power by repelling the schizophrenic explosion. As image, with its disruptive force it repels the big sleep of indifferent triteness or the great communal intoxication of bodies. The sentence-image reins in the power of the great parataxis and stands in the way of its vanishing into schizophrenia or consensus.

(Rancière, 2009b: 45)

¹⁰¹ I would also like to point to the translator's notes on pp. xvii, in which he clarifies the difference between Heidegger's and Derrida's usage of the term: "Being [Dasein] might point at an inarticulable presence whereas Derrida's trace is the mark of the absence of a presence, an always already absent present, of the lack at the origin that is the condition of thought and experience. Heidegger and Derrida teach us to use language in terms of a trace structure, effacing it even as it presents its legibility. We must remember this when we wish to attack Derrida... on certain sorts of straightforward logical grounds, for one can always forget the invisible erasure, act as though this makes no difference."

Therefore, in linguistic terms, Rancière exposes the power of parataxis, the syntactical device in sentence construction, as a potential visual power. There is perhaps a danger as seeing an image series as a strict temporal and linear progression: this is not always the case. By using the term 'parataxis', we are implicitly saying that each image (or each clause in the sentence) is both a statement and forms a collective part of a wider proclamation. Additionally, Rancière infers how image can disrupt language, where the text of plays a secondary function to the series of images that lay out the 'clauses' of the score.

We can then start to see the photographic acts that are scored together as illustrated above as a repetitive sequence as a way of rewriting the performative statement they hope to enact. The repetitions or executions of the act seem intentionally and absurdly inaccurate and yet 'necessary' to further underline (perhaps even score out) the many ways in which it could be cited. There is no 'defined conclusion' to these two sequences, leading the spectator to replicate and rewind the sequence continuously – ending it where they think it is appropriate. In doing so, and by displaying them side-by-side, the act is continually re-written over the top of itself, re-performed and deconstructed simultaneously. The act erases itself in its 'repetition on reception', 'writing' over the top of its own citation.

The idea of *sous rature* links back to Derrida's idea of the 'trace'¹⁰² (1976: 95) and perhaps brings into question the impossibility of 'presence' that language hopes to call forth. Derrida's argument is that in examining a binary opposition, in interrogating its *différance*, deconstruction manages to expose a trace. This is not a trace of the oppositions that have since been deconstructed, rather where the metaphysical rubs up against the non-metaphysical and deconstruction attempts to juxtapose this duality as best as it can.

In the same way, the images start to problematise the interplay between the origin of performatives, the interpretation of the statement by the performer and its enactment by the

¹⁰² One of Derrida's (1976: 95) first mentions of the trace discusses it as a 'non-origin' that forces us to consider the endless deferral of signs and signifiers. It is the 'always not-there' and the 'always not-that'. He writes: "Concepts suppose an anticipation, a horizon within which alterity is amortised as soon as it is announced precisely because it let has let itself be foreseen. The infinitely other cannot be bound by a concept, cannot be thought on the basis of a horizon: for a horizon is always a horizon of the same... This we are obliged to think in opposition to the truisms we believed to be the very ether of our thought and language... [it is a question] of liberating thought and it's language for the encounter occurring beyond these alternatives.... [it takes place] in the form of a separation (encounter as separation, another rupture of "formal logic")... It is present at the heart of experience. Present not as total presence but as a trace. Therefore, before all dogmas, all conversions, all articles of faith or philosophy, experience itself is eschatological at its origin and in each of its aspects."

spectator. Furthermore, the performance and photographic moments, the moving and the still, 'rub against' each other to expose this trace, especially when displayed in this manner as if to imply causality or continuity, adding a different temporal spin beyond the singular still image. Performance can visually demonstrate the difference between reading or speaking an act and the way it is physically interpreted and performed, exposing the gap between meaning and understanding. In the same way, the photographic sequences here disrupt the performance by transcribing it as a continuously present visual 'statement' [sentence] rather than allowing that statement to pass or end as a spoken utterance.

In the linguistic terms of performativity, that is to say if we are reading this photographs as 'speech acts', then sequencing images becomes an act of constructing a metaphorical sentence. We could look at one singular image as being a 'statement' in its own right whereas, when displayed or intended to be displayed as a sequence, the images take their own place in a wider articulation. And because the sentence never ends, it 'cites itself' in an endless loop for the spectator.

What might be perceived as this 'looping' is what Roland (2015: 76) calls "a means of releasing the accumulated, of emancipation and change. In reaching out to the invisible, the movement of iterability allows the shift... The iterative performance is therefore a game of switching off the past." What she suggests is there is a way of 'escaping' the eternal return and suggests that, (citing Deleuze, 1968:15) the oblivion that iteration presents can be a positive force that reopens 'other futures of the past'. In the latter statement, she suggests that repetition opens up possibilities. In these photographic iterations displayed sequentially, it does not just open up a different possibility from one performed act. The 'loop' of the sequence rewinds the performance to ask the spectator to consider the many different possibilities contained in the performance's own potential repetition in its photographic iteration.

***Différance* and mimetic irony: how to distance oneself from citation**

Over and above repeating an action, repetition might also be equated with imitation – or a type of 'mimesis'. Mimicry and mimesis are a distinctive kind of repetition and Connor (1988:3) discusses it as "that which stabilises and guarantees the Platonic model of origin and copy and that which threatens to undermine it". He refers to Plato's preoccupation with 'mimesis' and that

the artist's 'imitation' is twice removed from the Platonic ideal¹⁰³. In that sense, we can see that repeating or citing as an artistic device already has *différance* from its supposed ideal and, in performing citations, the artist makes a decision to be intentionally distanced from the normative execution of such actions by its mimetic *re-presentation* through the use of irony. This can be read in Irigaray's (1985) terms as an 'ironic mimesis', in which the exposition through playful repetition (or mimicry) exposes what is meant to remain invisible: what she terms an 'operation of the feminine' in language that undermines the dominant white male presupposition that use of language leads to logic and reason. In fact, both Plato (1991: 287) and Aristotle (1951: 39, 41) argue that mimesis counters *logos* as if this idea of logical argument leads to the truth. When the artist 'tests out' the reasoning of a statement or citation by performing it 'as written or said' to expose the difference between saying and doing and, in the two above examples, the instruction of the caption parrots language and how it is interpreted as action.

The performer has a certain liberty in being able to enact this situation under what Lütticken (2005: 60) calls 'laboratory conditions' stating, "Art can examine — under laboratory conditions, as it were — forms of repetition that break open history and the historicism returns of past periods; it can investigate historical moments or eras as potentials waiting to be reactivated, in forms that need not resemble anything". In this way, the studio space becomes an experimental one, where citations are enacted and held up to their own logic to see if they work out in practice. Performance then becomes a way of testing and that its photographic transcription can 'show' instead of tell; when we speak we can explain and correct, When the utterance is instead shown without the recipient present, they cannot intervene and therefore are subject to seeing the absurdities within the nuances of language.

Taking the idea of mimesis and potential 'mimicry' of language further, the investigations progressed by testing out such accepted truisms and figures of speech. In *Wrapped Up In Cotton Wool* (figure 4.3), the proverb is performed literally to camera using rolls of the material itself, hazard tape and bubble wrap. As the materials build up, it has a somewhat comedic effect, overly exaggerated in appearance. However, the practicalities of being heavily wrapped in material means it is easy to become overly heated and unable to breathe. In order to be released from this, the materials were ripped away, all the while taking photographs with a

¹⁰³ Plato uses the idea of the 'chair' and the 'original chair', the carpenter's chair and the artist's chair. Hence, if the original chair represents the 'Platonic ideal', then the artist's mimetic representation is twice removed from that.

remote shutter release, until I could feasibly free myself. In one of the final images, the tearing looks like a moment of 'emergence', with the cotton wool and hazard tape falling around the floor as though it were a dress.



Figure 4.3 – *Wrapped In Cotton Wool*

The demonstration reveals not the ridiculousness of the act, but the ridiculousness of the statement, questioning what grounding – if any – it has in experience. The aforementioned 'laboratory conditions' become encapsulated and represented by the frame, allowing the spectator an 'insight' into the artist's world that runs in parallel to the logic of the normative one. This contributes to the *différance* between the spoken citation and its visual execution to lend the image a 'pathos of distance', which Lunn (2006: 25) describes as the "expression of the human ability to relate abstractly to the world bringing us back to the everyday by estranging us from it". The photograph allows that distance, as there is a sense of hopelessness for the performer who now cannot be interrupted through time should the spectator wish to inform them this is an incorrect interpretation of the saying and so he becomes doomed to the repetition of this failing act. Through this deferral, the spectator not only reflects on absurdity of language, but also how interpretation affects meaning. Received visually, the photographic statement 'shows' rather than 'tells' and in realising that nothing can be done about the way in which the statement is performed, the spectator turns from ignorance to knowledge having seen an interrogation the statement.

This was further investigated in *Painting A Bowl of Fruit Reveals the True Self* (figure 4.4). In this series, the performance attempts to reverse that dynamic: to turn what was ‘fresh fruit’ into a painterly artwork. This mimics the tradition of art history to paint the typical bowl of fruit as the ‘standard’ work of still life, mattifying and attempting to immortalise what is organic and subject to decay.



Figure 4.4 – *Painting a Bowl of Fruit Reveals the True Self*

The attempt to transform the fruit into a purely aesthetic object, usually seen as a source of nourishment, eventually proves frustrating due to the impossibility of this task. In fact, the fruit is dulled by the paint, making it look unappealing both as a prospectively nutritious object and as an artwork in its own right. Thus, in painting it, it is rendered useless, abject and ‘throwaway’. The attempt to make organic food transcend its own impermanence and turn it into something iconic and canonical fails – except perhaps in its photographic form in which it repeats and ‘returns to’ its previously fresh state while simultaneously constantly being ruined by the painting of it.

This attempted preservation and simultaneous failed consumption of food started to cite the interplay between language, culture and the body. It was further evident in the next two series, *Drowning Your Sorrows* and *Crying Over Spilt Milk* (figure 4.5), which both take adaptations of figures of speech related to food and, with ‘mimetic irony’, revisit the cultural ideals of

consumption and ingestion. The repeated inability to ingest is displayed repeatedly, with a level of both anguish and absurdism emanating from the act. In *Crying Over Spilt Milk* the performer greedily tries to ingest through the eyes and mouth an impossible amount of milk, while in *Drowning Your Sorrows* the wine is poured into the mouth until the performer literally drowns and 'chokes' expelling the wine. The excess and mess highlights both greed and desire while suspending the possibility of the comestibles rotting, as well as the idea of any appropriate food etiquette:



Figure 4.5 – *Crying Over Spilt Milk* (top) and *Drowning Your Sorrows* (bottom)

Performing these actions serves to remind us of our fundamentally 'mortal' condition: we eat and imbibe to live, but by expelling it, we are not necessarily rejecting its sustenance as a nutritional object but the sustenance of the cultural ceremony that has been built up around food as an object in itself. Photographically though, there is a resistance to such decay and abjection. Not only in the photograph does the performer expel fluid rather than ingest it (hinting

at inherent rejection of its properties), displaying it in repetitive sequence means this is a continuous and purposeful act rather than an accident. This points towards a broad rejection of cultural ceremony and also of the linguistic ritual built up around ingestion.

Novero (2010: xxxv) states that these anti-diets are an act of resistance, in that the acts are already set up to fail bourgeois notions of taste. The task of the artist is to look for that resistance, testing their own and societies limits, in civil and aesthetic disobedience, in what has been declared a historical failure. Thus the future is a series of presents, and it is in each present – working through its "failed" pasts – that other futures (not one big future) can be imagined. She writes, "antidietetic experiments are experiments in failure, failure that is conceivable as the avant-garde's powerful minor war of position within majoritarian grammars that order language, the body, its pleasures and society."

The wider point to be drawn from this is that by using food as a cultural object, the performance resists these 'societal limits' and in so doing physically rejects 'swallowing' such dogma. This is literally depicted in figure 4.5 as a complete inability to ingest such 'majoritarian grammars' – or perhaps a refusal to do so. Transcribed as a photograph, it pushes back on time itself to reject the notion of a presence/absence binary. This counteraction against the 'decay' of ingestion [of performance] presents a conflict in which decay never occurs. Yet in the repetition of its photographic iteration, the performance itself is subject to some kind of decay in its erasure.

This 'exposes' excess for what it is: not only in excess of consumption, but also in the excesses of language, thereby becoming a broader cultural conduit. Kristeva (1982: 84) notes that food only becomes abject when "it is a border between two distinct entities or territories. A boundary between nature and culture, between the human and the nonhuman". Kristeva refers to the primitive effort to separate ourselves from the animal: "the abject marks the moment when we separated ourselves from the mother, when we began to recognize a boundary between "me" and other, between "me" and "(m)other" and the abject is "a precondition of narcissism" (ibid.: 12-13). The abject thus at once represents the threat that meaning is breaking down and constitutes our reaction to such a breakdown: a reestablishment of our "primal repression." The abject has to do with "what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules" and it draws attention to the "fragility of the law" (ibid.: 4). In being photographed, the foodstuffs attempt to resist such abjection and decay, calling back into question the delicate line between civility and animality.

Moreover, the acts here represent a willing defiance of written or spoken language as a primary communicator: they are a visual rejection of the culture that has built up around language expressed through the physical expulsion and disapproval of its proverbs in their practical execution. Capturing it photographically means it becomes disobedient to the conventions of linear time, evading the temporal pull that would drag the act into the past.

The over-performed, exaggerated gesture that happens for the camera dislocates the citation's place within a commonly understood phrase and transforms it into something else. It does this by, firstly, distancing commonplace understanding from literal execution by 'acting out' the statement, illustrating the difference between saying and doing. Secondly, the distance the 'experimental space' of the studio provides means the performer is not beholden to social expectations or etiquettes surrounding the act, or the common understandings that govern these spaces, allowing them to operate outside such constraints. This allows them to try and fail in such spaces. Lastly, distance is placed between what the spectator understands by the citation and what the artist understands, in the way that Lushetich (2014: 56) describes as creating the next move in a game between performer and spectator. Therefore, mimetic irony present in these undertakings acts as an intentional distancing technique from the culture from which these figures of speech arise.

This strategy has been used by the likes of Nauman, McCarthy and the Fluxus artists, and Hutcheon (1987: 203-24) touches on the inevitability of postmodernity as inherently 'ironic'. She suggests that 'parody' is (perhaps incorrectly) seen as a 'trivialization' but yet there "appears to be many pragmatic strategies" in using such a technique, one of which she indicates as 'deference'. She states that, "Parody marks both continuity and change, both authority and transgression. Postmodernist parody, be it in architecture, literature, painting, film, or music, uses its historical memory, its aesthetic introversion, to signal that this kind of self-reflexive discourse is always inextricably bound to social discourse." (ibid.: 206). She further implies that this kind of distancing is a hermeneutic activity between artist and audience, inferring that parodic re-enactment has the same quality of *différance* between performance and photography.

Performing such parodic acts as literally 'as written' [or spoken] requires seriousness and conviction. This, Düttman (2007: 40) describes, is the intriguing 'doubling' of irony: irony is itself

a construction of seriousness, and ironic acts prove to be both ironic and serious at the same time, hyper-ironic and overly serious, exaggeratedly serious and exaggeratedly ironic. He asks: “Is there a greater seriousness than that of the highest irony, a higher irony than that of the greatest seriousness?”

What is exposed by this practice is that artists and audiences share a set of conventions so familiar that occasionally neither side recognises that it is trafficking in such conventions. By ‘acting out’ an alternative utterance of the speech act. Thus the ‘exaggeration’ evident in the photographic images above, both in their deadpan literal intent and tongue-in-cheek playfulness, have been strategically ‘overplayed’ and over-performed to the camera to call to attention to the nuances of language that can only be understood when uttered [cited]. In this sense, we start to see these experiments as being acts of resistance that take language into the realm of the visual, inviting the spectator to reassess such truisms.

Aristotle discusses this alternative to the expected in relation to mimesis as *peripateia*, or ‘reversal’, that can occur when an action veers towards its opposite. Recognition (*anagnorisis*) describes a character's change from ignorance to knowledge. Both reversal and recognition are grounded in reason (1951: 39, 41). Aristotle uses these terms in reference to ‘tragedy’ or the ‘tragic’, and we can see these actions as tragic as his predecessor Plato was wary of the actions of mimesis and suggested mimetic acts are doomed to failure (1991: 287). We can see these photographic acts are indeed doomed to fail, doomed even to repeat that failure through their photographic transcription, eroding any conviction in the statements. But if it illustrates any failure at all, it is the failure of verbal and written language to produce a common understanding. However, the function of ironic doubling and exaggeration through mimesis means the action is both tragic (in its ‘unsuccess’) and comic (in that it never aims to succeed) and the photographs depend on a mutual idea of constructivism of language between performer and spectator – one that this form of deconstruction exposes. The result is that the catharsis is expelled through humour – possibly calling upon the power of the slapstick man to whom I referred in the first chapter, or even the idea of *idiot savant* – and not through the emotional release of tragedy.

In these instances, mimetic irony on behalf of the performer is used as a peripatetic and cathartic tool to ‘reverse’ the meaning and try to reveal its trace, its origin. However, it must contain enough recognisability in its citation that the spectator acknowledges it as a figure of speech. It is the spectator, not the performer, that moves from ignorance to knowledge: that the

irony and ridiculousness has always been inherent within the utterance itself and that the spectator may have never questioned its origins. Displayed in sequence, the images close their own loop and the fact the photographic performance cannot be curtailed or stopped while gazing on it, it rewrites the act over the top of itself, continually comparing itself against the spectator's understanding and the place of that understanding within a wider cultural context¹⁰⁴.

Though there is an exaggerated form of this irony present in the investigations of this chapter, it could be argued that performance to camera is inherently imbued with such mimesis. Any act that knows itself to be performed has a very self-conscious mimetic quality to it and, if the performer knows that they are playing with *différance*, they are actively thinking of how the gesture is received in such a manner. For example, if the artist knows they are performing for camera, they know the performance will be received as an image and therefore will be viewed at a future point in time. The act is then 'knowingly performed' for such a reception, taking into consideration the *différance* between event and photograph.

Mimetic irony may then be an unavoidable consequence of performing an act that is intended to be received photographically as Behler (1990: 109) claims the idea of *différance* is 'infected' with irony from the start. He suggests that the concept 'functions from within' and that differing and deference moves language to an impossible zone that exemplifies "the impossibility and necessity of complete communication". He explains that it happens at the limits of communication, resulting in a 'self-undoing' and the structural irony of 'the mark' [or trace] is reduced to a form of parody, a critical use of a structure from within the structure – *différance* is an oscillation between meanings that undo themselves. Likewise, mimesis may be concerned with appearance and the effects of those appearances, but it is 'self-knowing' in that the performer knows they are undertaking an intentional performance of that act¹⁰⁵. What the performer does not know is the performative nature it then exposes which, in this form of citational practice, seeks to erode the statement down to its trace.

¹⁰⁴ We could also liken this to Gadamer (1989) in his analysis of *Truth and Method*, in which he argues that the most important dynamic of conversation as a model for the interpretation of a text is the give-and-take of question and answer. In other words, the interpretation of a given text will change depending on the questions the interpreter asks of the text. The "meaning" emerges not as an object that lies in the text or in the interpreter, but rather an event that results from the interaction of the two, constituting 'hermeneutic experience'. Auslander (2009) develops this idea in relation to performance documentation.

¹⁰⁵ In fact, Derrida's *Limited Inc* (1988) does suggest that the difference between sincerity and irony in the speech act is sometimes impossible to know and the intention presupposes the iterability of a statement. He believes that language could not work at all without the ever-present and ineradicable possibility of such alternate readings.

Parody, patricide, process

More than just statements or figures of speech, citations can be directly referential – either intentionally or incidentally – and the mimetic irony that results from such citations can resituate that which it references. Repetition of an act through a new body can call to mind collective visual cues or references from wider popular culture that are embedded in the civil imagination. These can be usefully invoked as a framework through which the spectator is able to ‘read’ the act and this becomes evident in the piece *If You Can’t Make A Piece Of Art, Be One* (figure 4.6). Here, a large sheet of paper was pinned to a studio wall and painted with various parts of my body with no forethought to the pattern or outcome that it may produce. Again, displayed in sequence, the task slowly builds up into a full painting. The irony is apparent in the title: the painting is not undertaken with the professionalism or training of a ‘fine artist’. Instead it takes it into the ‘realm’ of performance and prioritises ‘the action of’ painting. Present in the images is an exaggeration in the ‘painting of’ the image and both the action and the ‘work of art’ is read in relation to its creation by the body, imbuing it with a sense of ‘the live’, but then turned two-dimensional once again through the act of photography.





Figure 4.6 – *If You Can't Make A Piece of Art (Be One)*

There are echoes present here between this series of images and Jackson Pollock's action painting. On reflecting closely on this, there could perhaps be a connection that critiques such formalist notions of art and its execution through its mimetic irony. By recalling action painting, it equally recalls other such citations of the form, such as Paul McCarthy's *Penis Brush Painting* and *Whipping A Wall and Window With Paint* (both 1974). In both of these actions, McCarthy parodies the idea of action painting when, in the first action, he dips his flaccid penis into red paint and brushes it across the canvas, while in the second he takes a very heavy, soaked cloth and whips it against the wall. Levine (2013) writes:

McCarthy at once over-literalises [Pollock's] mythologised masculinity to the point of satire and undermines it through the obvious insufficiency of both the painting and the artist's flaccid brush... [in whipping a wall] McCarthy struggles to achieve the requisite splatters and gestures, needing to swing his heavy, paint-soaked cloth around several times to gain enough momentum... Whereas Penis Brush

Painting is a feeble rendition, Whipping A Wall is over the top. Both foreground the hyperbolic gendering of Pollock's drops and splatters.

(Levine, 2013: 91)

In the same way, Rauschenberg evoked the same critique when he erased De Kooning drawing, which Calvin Tomkins (1980: 96) called 'a destructive act of patricide'. Therefore, an unintentional mimicry of Pollock's action painting was an inherently Freudian way of 'taking on' some of the modernist era's heralded 'fathers' of postmodern conceptualism. By placing the body back into the images and using theatricality and photography as a 'counter-medium' to the supposed seriousness and 'irreproducibility' of the painterly medium detailed or questioned by the likes of Walter Benjamin, in turn challenging the somewhat reverent attitude to the 'painted image' over the 'photographic'. The former prizes the endurance of the handcrafted image, while the latter exposes the time-based tensions between process and product. Displaying the 'building up' of the image as a process in a sequence rather than a final piece within itself further highlights this.

Allen (2005) argues that calling upon these citational acts is exactly that: that citation presupposes and searches for a 'lost body' – there is someone always assumed to be gone and the 'reinsertion' of the body is a way of locating the 'totality' of the work (ibid.: 179). What is even more interesting is that Allen talks specifically about photographing such acts of citation and describes a process of 'double alienation', because as the 'biological' body is replaced by the 'mechanical reproduction' of the photographic image, "the actor's presence becomes superfluous, the audience becomes the missing body that is endlessly reproduced and interchangeable, across time and space" (ibid.: 200). She then details that as the script shifts from actors to spectators, interpretation is no longer about authenticity but reception. She poses that "the question is not "is this re-enactment¹⁰⁶ true to the past?" but "is this re-enactment true to the present?" (ibid.: 201). So the reinsertion of oneself into the frame, further utilises the tool of *différance*. When the body is put back into the work, it becomes lost on its transcription and asks the spectator to find that body within the present and consider its relevance. This reinsertion not only calls upon the provocation of the 'now' but additionally calls upon the spectator to use their unconscious knowledge as a form of agency with which to recollect and

¹⁰⁶ As mentioned, this is Allen's wording but what we can read here is how, on citing such acts, we are asked to call them back into the present for comparative 'reading' of the act.

re-inscribe.

In this example, Pollock never 'appeared in' his paintings, but the 'process of' producing one of his pieces was extensively documented, most notably in Namuth's 1950 film *Pollock*. The popularisation of his technique through its documentation meant that the act of painting then takes on an autonomous function, reducing the finished product to the status of 'by-product'. By reintroducing the body into the piece, coupling it with the ironic titling and displayed as a sequence of photographic images, it claims the act of painting in itself is the work, the body is a main proponent of that work and the painting itself is not the work at all. In fact, the painting was discarded after the performance – all that remains are the photographs. This is a statement in itself, wherein the body and painting are once again made two dimensional as the same image to become the work in totality rather than the painting becoming the 'by-product' of performance to then be exhibited independently of the documentation of its creation.

Taking the somewhat Freudian analogy further, we could see Pollock's painting as somewhat of an attempt to assert a 'masculine' presence with an ejaculation of paint across the canvas. Both McCarthy's re-enactment and this piece destabilise and emasculate the idea of 'ejaculate as presence'. Aydemir (2007: 245) shuts down the idea of this suggesting that the analogous semen has lost its ability to matter: "Serialised and reiterated as hiccups without consequence, ejaculation forfeits its power of conclusion, climax, culmination. Hence, both dissolve... They disappear as tropes of masculine distinction... Thus, the ultimate and paradoxical consequence of the sustained conceptualisation of ejaculation is that it can no longer support a concept". The consequences of this is that Pollock's 'ejaculate' is and was never enough to sustain our idea of what we desired from the work in the first instance – a desire a new photographic image hopes to fulfil.

Perhaps there is a bigger point here about the state of painting after performance, which inevitably started to imprint absence onto the surface of the canvas. For example, Yves Klein's *Anthropometries* (1960), the shooting pictures of Niki de St Phalle (1961) and the Viennese Aktionists (like Rudolf Schwarzkolger's *Third Action*, 1965) all used actions as materials, but then presented the surface of the canvas as *fait accompli*. However, photographing the process calls the performance required to produce the artefact back into question, foregrounding its relevance and marking how painting has changed as a result of the body in performance.

The suggestion here is that perhaps we are and always were trying to locate Pollock's 'body' within his work yet we are only ever given traces of its action in the form of splatters and strokes against a canvas. In 'performing' the act of painting and displaying it as image, traces of my own body and its action in photographic form as a form of documentation without the final 'art object' – itself reduced to a 'background' with the title of the piece locating the actions as the work rather than the painting. Inverting the relationship between the art object and the process of making the work of art, it exposes to some extent that the fascination with Pollock's technique was in its overtly theatrical performance rather than in its product, which led to his own actions worthy of a spectacle 'becoming' a work of art. This leads to an inherent clash between process over product: was the aestheticised appreciation of Pollock's work inherent in the work itself, or was it the process of making the work? By citing it through performance, the artist raises questions and the photographic sequence sustains them, not only losing Pollock's body in the process but also my own.

From pop art to lingering leftovers

In revisiting modernist ideas of repetition and unrepeatability, we might look to pop art as one of the main proponents of duplication in visual culture and how it questioned the unique 'aura' of art in its use of mass-produced imagery re-analysed in the context of a 'work of art'. Warhol led this charge and Potts (2015: 187) described the movement as a 'radical break' with traditional artistic mimesis that 'fabricated the processes of transformation and transposition' involved in the classic understanding of mimesis, however this was only possible once photomechanical processes had become sufficiently developed. These quasi-mechanical processes transposed the image into the medium of painting (ibid.: 207) and what we can see happening in the photographic images produced here is a very similar technique. The citation uses language as a readymade material to repurpose into a performance. That performance is then transposed into the reproducible still pitting the 'aura' of performance against the mechanical processes of photography and transforming the once three dimensional back into two dimensions again.

Facing the questions that pop art posed, the next series performs those references to bring them back into circulation as 'open debates' rather than as closed artworks. The first of these direct acknowledgments is *Silkscreen Superstar* (figure 4.7):



Figure 4.7 – Silkscreen Superstar

Over the course of five hours in one studio session, I physically painted myself in different variations of the same pattern and repeatedly performed the same facial expressions and gestures to camera. The effect is the final image is that on first glance it looks similar to the silk screens with vibrant contrasting colours and what appears to be a ‘repetition with difference’ in the acts. On closer inspection the inconsistencies become apparent. The head appears to tilt slightly more to the right as the sequence goes on. In the last image, paint in the right-hand eye makes it appear a different colour. The painted lines on the body and eye are wider in some images than others. The realisation of this effect is that it is not a silkscreen at all and every image is an individually performed portrait to camera, each with its own inconsistencies and errors. There is a knowing reference to the group of followers around Warhol known as his ‘superstars’ and calls on the famous images of Marilyn Monroe and Elvis¹⁰⁷, as well as Warhol’s own repetitive experiments with photography¹⁰⁸.

Bringing the glamourisation of pop art’s mechanical reproduction into question, the performance of the silkscreen becomes re-aestheticised once more by being photographed and displayed together to reveal its own structural inconsistency. The same critique is at play in *I Wish I Could*

¹⁰⁷ *Untitled from Marilyn Monroe* (1967) and *Double Elvis* (1963) respectively.

¹⁰⁸ *Cadaver* (1986) illustrates this identical, repetitive effect through photography.

Live In Andy Warhol's Dream of America (figure 4.8), which sees me as the performer taking on the guise of a wraith-like Andy Warhol with long red, white and blue talons to sit down to a meal of Warhol's canonised brands (Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Campbell's Soup and ketchup). The idea arose from thinking of Warhol's relationship with food as a sanitary one in which he prizes the values of commercial branding over any nutritional or anti-nutritional value. Warhol was more interested in the idea of the mass consumption of its iconography and imagery rather than its literal consumption, and this series exposes the more grotesque, more animal and possibly even more capitalist potential behind his depictions of food. The effect portrays Warhol as a greedy 'mass consumer', in turn reflecting his art that was produced and consumed on a massive scale. The meal is then devoured in somewhat of an over-saturated environment of Americana with a strong and distinctive colour motif.



Figure 4.8 – *I Wish I Could Live In Andy Warhol's Dream of America*

Delville (2008: 68-69) states that Warhol's interest was in 'machine food', which is a kind of food that is untouched by human hands and whose availability reminds us it is possible to satisfy our material needs with the products of machines. He says: "The sanitary conditions in which packaged food is produced and sold also underlines the artist's desire to control the body's food supply in a way that seeks to repress or at least conceal its actual conditions of production behind the reassuring glossiness of the boxes and cans."

By 'playing out', 'performing' or demonstrating the sacred, untouched pristine Americana of Warhol's treasured brands – his desire for sleek, aesthetic sanitisation that Delville hints Warhol craved – it exposes that behind the finesse and packaging consumer culture layers onto food, it is inescapably abject, brutal and animal. 'Breaking open' the idea of commercial imagery and fast food, the images reveal that no matter how much Warhol tried to idolise and aestheticise the packaging and branding, behind it lays the abjection of consumption.

However, Morton (2004: 267) reminds us that food itself, expels, expires and becomes abject – no matter how much branding you layer on top of it. "Ideology resides not only in ideas about McDonald's hamburgers, but in those very burgers themselves... Coke turns flat eventually. Moreover, its very zinginess has something flat about it, flat but not unprofitable, at least for the corporation: it embodies pure flavour, an utterly non-utilitarian drink that renders the taste of thirst itself.... Such criticism resolves the ideological cynical distance by tampering with the objectal kernel of distance".

Yet what is interesting about this is the final image that shows the food, or perhaps the branding, as it has been expelled – the leftovers (as featured as the centre image, figure 4.9). Now displayed as 'used' the image in itself asserts a fact that there has been a presence, a performance of eating, in order to create whatever remains afterwards. The performance reasserts Morton's statement. No matter how much we love what he terms the 'zinginess' of Coke, through consumption we render it 'unzingy' and taint it with human consumption.

Warhol's works seem to immortalise and to some extent eternalise the power of mass consumption and 'the brand'; something that remains to be seen considering commercialisation of this manner and on this scale is a relatively recent phenomenon. The performances present in the photographic image literally unpack that proposition, while the images demystify the brand's ability to sustain and endure as an aestheticised object, instead subjecting it to decay. Behind the 'clean-cut' untouchability of the slick commercial image lies the abjection it tries to disguise and though we 'dress up' what Delville calls 'machine food', it expires and decays – just as performance does. The photographic imagery revokes the conclusion of expiration, though, and confronts us with the mess behind the packaging as that which is both always and never subject to its own expiration. In doing so, the photographic leftovers not only assert their own presence, but that of the performer.

By calling upon pop art in these photographic performances, repetition becomes used against itself. Not only do the images 'cite' the problematic quandary of art and mechanical reproduction that the genre called upon, it also then makes those notions challenging by using the non-repetition of performance in the repetitive iteration of the photograph. Repetition, therefore, counters its own function: whereas pop art emphasises the difference in brute repetition, performance emphasises the impossibility of such repetition even in a photographic iteration. The photograph of the performed action *should* have the same quality of mechanical equity. Instead what happens is it defers such possibilities, allowing for the lingering spectre of decay to hover over the images whilst simultaneously rebooting the loop back to the beginning to be replayed, arguably putting the whole performance and the performer's presence *sous rature*. Through its erasure, it somehow asserts the presence of the performer as 'absent, yet necessary to say [iterate]'.

Warhol's work attempted to distance the product from the abject by presenting these forms of Coke bottles and Campbell's soup cans as aesthetic objects in and of themselves. Performance presents the actuality of that in its consumption and by photographing the act the sustained still image is the leftovers. Like *Painting A Bowl of Fruit*, the photograph comes to reject notions of foodstuffs as the main feature of 'the still life' because we know that food decays, is ingested and is temporal. In its sustained depiction of mess, the image challenges the spectator to see its inherent decay and yet never be subject to such decay, only becoming the 'lingering leftovers' that continue to assert their presence. This is embodied in the last image in the sequence of three of these acts (displayed in figure 4.9 below):



**Figure 4.9 – (left to right) Leftovers from *Wrapped in Cotton Wool*, *I Wish I Could Live*
In Andy Warhol's *Dream of America* and *Painting a Bowl of Fruit Reveals the True Self***

Kaye (2012: 221) states that the photograph asserts the performer's presence through very noticeable absences and in these images the 'palimpsest' of presence that is the discarded materials, the inedible food, the inevitable 'mess' of performance asserting what has happened, what was present. The anticipation of decay can never be fulfilled forcing the performance loop to begin again. Bordo (2015: 226) says that these forms of imitation create and bring back to nature the forms that are in and of nature. They are "imitations defined by the transitory, by work in transit, operating at the intersections of ethics and aesthetics... Imitations of contemporary art accept, indeed embrace their passing state as mere images; they accept, indeed embrace, their mortality."

Conclusion: photographic transcription as a performative 'undoing'

With absence asserting presence, we arrive back at Derrida's idea of the eternal return and the desire to continually 'return to' certain events. In the same way this chapter has illustrated that revisiting citations in a number of ways, especially when performed with the distancing effect of irony's duality of both knowing parody and hyper-serious intentionality, can act as a form of deconstruction through which we can re-analyse 'the trace' or 'the origin' of speech acts, linguistics and cultural memory. By speaking alone and responding through thought, misunderstanding can be easily dismissed. In capturing them in the photographic act and

displaying them as a sequence, we re-encode the statement or reference, disrupting conventional assumptions around the utterance and rendering this new interpretation into the civil imagination as images of potential change. Hart (2013) describes this phenomenon:

The reader embodies the text as the author does and, in their own re-enactments, they produce a meaning that moves through time, but that other readers and writers re-interpret. [Images] lead to a discovery of discovery or recognition of recognition and its limits... Text and images are built out of other texts and images in the world, but they create and reflect in a refraction that is not the world.

(Hart, 2013: 143-146)

It seems apt that Hart employs the term 'refraction', as in these photographic acts the camera lens is able to concentrate and bend this 'new light' into a new perspective. Capturing and displaying the act via photography plays on this idea of 'refraction': a way of taking a brief departure and displays it as its own world with an ulterior, yet recognisable, logic so that the spectator can see in, literally, a different light. In Plato (1991: 286), Socrates puts a stick into a puddle and on seeing that the stick appears bent beneath the water describes that we are conflicted by our rational side that knows it is not physically bent and our irrational side that gets pleasure from the illusion. Socrates asserts that the senses give us contradictory evidence while reason and logic give us the answers.

In a similar way, the camera lens manages to bend the light and rescale the totality of the performance, giving the illusion that we are peering into a literal snapshot of alternative understanding where *photo*-graphy, the drawing of that light, has been distorted. However, the spectator gazes at the photograph as they would observe the surface of the Platonic puddle: as distanced observers, they can see both reason and mimicry. The double-edged tool of irony plays out these statements with both serious resolve and comic exaggeration to expose this intent as a form of deconstruction. However, rather than providing contradictory evidence, it exposes the flaws of logic.

Deconstruction prioritises writing over speech and in the same way we have thus far analogised (or brought to the fore) the photograph as a way to 'transcribe' [write] performance and analyse

how the act becomes the performative. However, as this section of the investigation continued there were two elements to consider. Firstly, how performance deconstructs the 'performing of' figures of speech and other wider cultural citations that have entered the structural unconscious and secondly how photography deconstructs these in the 'performing of' these statements in itself as a photographic sequence. In this way we can see the performance of the act as the citation: the reference, the 'act that utters', the statement. The images then become an 'iteration' of that performance; a way of replaying, rewriting, possibly even re-recording each time it is 'iterated' on visual reception.

Returning to Düttman (2007), he posits that any philosophical preoccupation with deconstruction is a preoccupation with 'truth'¹⁰⁹, and this would certainly fit into the history of mimesis, as truth is something Plato was primarily concerned with in its relationship to mimesis. However, in conducting investigations in that try to get to the root of or illustrate the difference in citation what we can learn is that relying on mutual constructivism as a form of reasoning is flawed. Rockmore (2013: 34-35) argues that the Platonic mode of thought suggests that etymologies could somehow point towards 'reason' but this method echoes the problems of what we could call 'performative practice' if we see it as citational as opposed to imitation: "[It] amounts to asking if etymologies are capable of knowing the real. In order for this theory to work, written words must always imitate what they stand for... This seems doubtful... One would have to know what one imitates prior to imitating it in order to know that the imitation has been successful".

Adorno (1974: 210) claims that notions of 'authenticity' – and in this sense we could think of 'authentic execution' of the performance act – pander to essentialism and that the function of irony has changed: irony is dependent on a presupposition, a constructivism of irony and does so with great precision: "The medium of irony has itself come into contradiction with truth. Irony convicts its object by presenting it as what it purports to be; and without passing judgement, as if leaving blank for the observing subject, measures it against its being-in-itself... In this it presupposes the idea of the self-evident, originally of social resonance".

In this sense, mimetic irony erodes the origins of citations by calling upon them and acting out its alternative to challenge their own internal structure. In turn, this reveals the internal structure

¹⁰⁹ I recognise this is a problematic term, but it is the word that both Düttman and Plato use. Rockmore (2013) additionally talks about 'art and truth' after Plato. In mentioning this term, I am merely referring to the phrasing these other theorists have employed rather than a term I necessarily agree with or think is 'absolute' in definition and therefore defer to the meaning of the term expressed by the above theorists.

of cultural memory and Western visual consciousness is based on a falsehood of it being 'self-evident' when in fact it is unstable in nature and devoid of any reason we might seek within statements. Truisms in language and cultural memory become so when we leave them unchallenged and untested. Only by 'acting out' statements, shared cultural references and citations can we open up the meaning and start to interrogate where they may have come from and if they still stand up to logic. Rather than saying we are capable of knowing the origins that inform performativity, what they say is that we are incapable of finding them: that the mutuality of understanding between spectator and performer is based on an unknown quality with rocky foundations. The performer exploits this instability and attempts to revitalise the potential of meaning, taking it from the verbal and the written into the visual realm. Though something may make sense when *spoken* these images illustrate that there is even further distance between speaking and doing.

The attempt here is to locate in these photographic statements is a lost body, one that is constantly *sous rature*, one that the performer provides through acting out the statement in an attempt to reinvigorate the potential of that utterance. On its photographic transcription, it becomes lost once more and asserts its presence by insisting on its absence. Because this mode of photographic presentation relies on the spectator's *past* understandings and the *différance* of the photograph is geared towards the future, the visual reception of the act in the present 'undoes' those past meanings and even deconstructs itself as a performance that happened in the past, as the act of enactment ushers it forth into the present. Therefore, on each presentation of this statement, the spectator recalls and compares the refracted logic of the photographic image to the comparative reasoning of their own comprehension of the cultural memory it encapsulates, asking themselves if it holds to be true *in this moment*. Mimetic irony is the distancing tool that ensures that the statement both holds up to reason and is doomed to failure, meaning it can never be 'true' or 'representative', merely an alternative. The dilemma is resolved temporarily by cathartic relief, abjecting the emotional conflict to dismiss the uncertainty of the trace it exposes – until it is viewed again. The trace exposed by the tension between performance and photograph reveals that any mutual comprehension is based on unknown origins. But instead of satiating the spectator, it reveals the emptiness of origin and erases past understandings while continually producing new ones, re-writing, erasing and producing simultaneously.

Heathfield (2000: 106) says that repetition persists in recurrence and remains “unresolved, haunting our memories documents and critical frameworks” and continues to state that “the use of gestural repetition and difference creates suspensions and returns in our experience” (Heathfield, 2006: 92-93). In the framework of citation, we can think of it as never quite complete in itself as a full, looping ‘repetition’; it makes us ‘return to’ and evaluate what we thought we recognised rather than repeating as if by rote what we thought we knew. Performance is capable of illustrating that citation is never a ‘naked’ or ‘bare’ repetition and the eternal return becomes an aide to re-evaluate certain values. However, a return simultaneously transforms and ‘returning’ represents the time of the future rather than the idea of history repeating itself. Here we might suggest that these returns are not ‘re-enactments’ [history repeating], but instead set in motion [from Benjamin’s *zeiteren* or to cite] a statement governed towards future reception. In doing so, the spectator is prompted to ‘recollect’ their past understanding and compare it with the citation, allowing them to reflect on the commonality of cultural understanding.

Citational practice that plays with such mimetic possibilities through repetition in performance to camera becomes performative not because it ‘does’, but because it ‘undoes’. Kartsarki (2016: 196, 206-207) discusses how returning to an event again and again in memory or writing is a process that attempts to restore or repair experience, to resist the ephemeral, to enable us to feel the sorrow of what is gone or come to terms with what resists appropriation. This process may not have a singular end; yet sometimes we may be in search of a feeling of closure. Ultimately, though, endings escape from us forming an experience that is *not quite yet*. In the same way, our search for finitude in such performed photographic repetitions leads the loop to be played repeatedly and in so doing continually unpicks the *différance* between what we thought we knew and what we now understand in light of what the new citation brings; a process that in itself has no definitive conclusion.

CONCLUSION: PERFORMANCE, PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE FUTURE OF PERFORMATIVITY

On findings

The framework of this thesis outlines that when performance is received at a later point in time via the photograph, a different facet of its performativity is unveiled. Through the course of the practical investigations, what has been identified is not necessarily the possibility of performance existing ‘after the fact’ or ‘beyond liveness’, but that the *différance* between performing the act and the reception of that act as a still image allows the spectator to access the ‘structural unconsciousness’ – something that cannot be present to the performer or the performance in liveness. This happens because its reception as a still image invokes the power of citation to set in motion a series of social, cultural and political provocations. Consequently, when the spectator enacts the citation in their imagination, it becomes the ‘doing’ that is characteristic of ‘the performative’.

To expand on Auslander’s position of the performativity of performance documentation, these documents of photographic practices that employ performance are not performative because they are documented with the intention of being seen as ‘performance’ in the now they are viewed. They become performative because of their ability to tap into the agency of performance by unveiling the act’s iteration in the structural unconscious, revealing something other than the performance itself is capable of being in the live moment.

What we might consider here is that the gearing of performance towards the anticipated future reception of the still image employs performativity because the photograph has the capacity to span a series of temporal registers. This gives the image a complementary register to the performative, which relies simultaneously on past understandings, present reception and future action. However, the effect of this performativity is not in the direct control of the performer as they can neither predict the ‘*punctum*’ or ‘piercing effect’ of the image nor how that image will be received in the future by the spectator. Davis (2013) identifies this when she explains that the power of performativity lies not in its ability to usher forth what she terms an ‘all-speaking present’, but that it has the capacity to breach temporality while, simultaneously, presenting the spectator with an unexpected sense of event. Davis writes, “The hope is not that its power might be mastered... But that its rupturing force might throw time and its normative limits.... leaving us open to the gift of futurity, a to-come for which I cannot prepare” (2013: 82).

In realising one's actions can never be fully present to themselves or to the conscious mind, the images become imbued with statements that do not require the verbalisation or contextualisation of the performer. Performativity is the equivalence of language that Mitchell (2005) has expressed images desire, as it is not the intentional and purposeful expression of the artist, but an act of co-creation between performer, image and spectator.

Therefore, the pull of the 'doing' of performance in the photograph lies in its ability to usher forth the 'yet to come'; to articulate statements in a subjective 'future possible' tense. In this way we can understand that the attempt to use the photograph as a vehicle for performance is a way to give the performance act a different kind of agency that can only exist at a future point in time. Agency is a channel that hovers above and after 'liveness', the latter term suggesting that we are only interested in performance's ontology and presence. Performance has the power to activate and motivate, photography the power to distribute and disseminate. Combined, these photographic documents intentionally play on the image's ambiguous status between presence and absence. Instead we recognise the artist has chosen to already be absent in the photograph while the social, political and cultural provocation of performance is continuously present through its visual presentation in the still image, creating a friction through which the performativity of the photograph arises.

I therefore propose that choosing photography as a medium for performance, or choosing to document performance through performance to camera, is in fact a way of proliferating performance's inherent potential to become a broad and resonant social, cultural or political provocation when it is distanced from the live act. What performance 'does' in the still image is to set in motion a shift that signals a continuous longing for change; a desire that comes from the artist and is realised on its enactment by the spectator. Performativity is not just a way of allowing performance to be present in the moment the image of it is viewed. It is because the image reveals the unconscious nature of 'the performative' that it projects through time a more poignant aspect of performance – its ability to reveal the cultural resonance of the actions produced by the body and its relation to the environment it inhabits as a snapshot of experience.

This thesis identified and demonstrated through practice three different ways this is made manifest in the photograph. Firstly, when movement is withdrawn in the image it 'disorients' the spectator due to the photograph's ability to queer normative body-object – and even body-space – relations. Through enactment, the balance is restored and the spectator can speculate

on both the many potential outcomes the performer may be subject to, in addition to considering how the ever-present effects of gravity might affect their own body. Secondly, the artist can use the photograph to reframe the totality of 'life-size' events into a single snapshot of experience to allow the spectator to experience the event when they are 'emancipated' from the constraints of public behaviour. Recognising the difference between the dis-identificatory non-citizen and the 'public', the image transmits the desire for change and asks the spectator to imagine a future without such boundaries. Lastly, through repetition of citation, the photograph can present alternative 'logics' that can 'undo' previous understandings, while 're-presenting' others. The performer can visually demonstrate the difference between meaning and understanding, or thought and practice, in order to deconstruct and reconfigure meaning.

Moreover, the analysis was only possible with distance. For example, in the chapter of the instantaneous there was no motivation to 'reveal' anything further than experimenting with the act of freezing movement between one point and another. On looking at the image, though, such a simple act becomes rich with potential through what it points towards, what it references and what it imitates. Simply falling in front of someone would not conjure up the same thoughts and ideas, as it is too quick for the spectator to register the act and place it within a frame of experience. Likewise, the non-negotiated contract between the emaciated spectator of a given performance intervention, as discussed in the second chapter, is different to the civil contract the emancipated spectator affords the image. Because they are not constrained by social behaviours, they are 'free' to consider the act both in and out of context. The photograph has the capacity to 'show' rather than 'tell', opening up visual associations with language that suggest how one might revisit such associations when they are shown and how the same statement can be interpreted and enacted differently.

Throughout all the chapters, we see how the photograph allows performance to pose those myriad possibilities of reference, as distance [*différance*] from the act encourages contemplation, reflection and enactment. Temporal proximity to the live has to date been considered the primary and/or superior mode of experiencing performance in performance studies, this thesis illustrates that – in the case of the still image – *différance* can be an essential part of revealing what it is possible for performance to 'do' after the act itself is over. Performativity becomes the aspect of the still image that is simultaneously present and absent, as it calls to mind for the spectator both the absence of the origin of the citation being performed and the continuously present *différance* summoned to the forefront of the spectator's mind by

the intentionally performed citation of any given performance act that is presented visually in the photograph.

A variety of other themes are present within the images: rejections of iterations of gender, contorting the body into spaces of failure that resist notions of being an 'upright citizen', the reclamation of the shaming of overtly queer behaviours, as well as questioning bourgeois notions of authority and reverence in the conceptualist canon. However, if performativity is the diagnosis or root cause of the performer's wish to employ *différance* as 'deferred performance', then all of those themes are the symptoms of its presence in the photograph, as one act can set in motion a variety of references.

One of the most relevant aspects of this practice-research is that in one of Derrida's (2010) last interviews, he discusses his thoughts on photography and suggests that perhaps we have reached the limits on the 'episteme' of the craft, proposing that we should now turn to the 'techné'¹¹⁰. In other words, that we should explore the 'doing' or applied craft of photography to discover what it has to add to the canon. The interplay of critical reflection and theoretical assertion present in this exegesis adds an element of 'learning by doing' or 'knowing for oneself'. In setting up an heuristic methodology where the results could only be known when the image was produced played with the idea that only upon seeing the still image could one analyse what the performance 'does' as a performative photographic statement. This autoethnographic perspective recounts the difference between what the performer experiences internally and tacitly, and what is experienced as a spectator visually and externally. In the methodology, I note that Auslander, Sontag, Barthes et al give their perspective of how photography works without having extensive experience of the craft of photography. The theoretical propositions made here, however, are grounded in the tacit experience of practice and reviews the experience from the perspective of both performer and photographer in an attempt to approach the question of 'how' rather than the 'what' and 'why' of the field.

On the future of performativity in photography

Derrida (2010) talks specifically about performative photography as 'photography without an original'. That is to say because digital photography has no imprint, no film on which the light

¹¹⁰ Or, put simply, that the 'knowing' is in the 'doing' of the craft. Shiner (2001: 19-20) writes that 'techné' in artistic disciplines might be more to do with the human ability to make and perform and how that ability holds its own knowledge, rather than the theorisation of why that might occur.

has been 'drawn', it has no external 'referent' and so the act of 'recording' and 'producing' loses its point of reference. He states:

We would be dealing with a photographic performativity, a notion that some might find scandalous and that singularly complicates – without dissolving it – the problem of reference and truth: the problem of a truth to be made, as Saint Augustine would have said, no less than revealed, unveiled, explicated, clarified, exposed, developed.

(Derrida, 2010: 5)

It is clear within the idea of performativity that concepts of authenticity and belief remain an issue. He continues to identify the film negative as the 'referent', in question and through the introduction of the digital sensor there are now two questions: a) what happens when there is no material origin for the image and b) to what extent does an image have to refer to a happening that occurred in the physical world? Auslander implicitly touches on the idea of referentiality in his original (2006) paper by asking to what extent does a performance document have to pertain to [or be referent of] 'a performance that happened' in order to be considered performance? But further to this we must also consider the scale of manipulation afforded us by Photoshop and digital editing techniques. It is now possible to create, collage and implement many fantastical scenarios beyond that which is possible in the physical world.

One approach we could draw on is Eshelman's (2008:1) notion of 'performatism'. He describes this term as indicating the end of a cynical postmodernism and where "author, work, and reader all tumble into an endless regress of referral that has no particular fix point, goal, or centre". He places the artist at the centre of a 'creative theism' and the spectator as someone who is meant to 'buy into' an all-consuming theistic power.

Using the example of photographer Thomas Demand, Eshelman (2008: 212-215) explains the progression of postmodernism to performatist in photography. Demand photographs handmade constructions of scenes where famous and infamous figures were last seen alive, such as the corridor Jeffrey Dahmer walked down to his death and the tunnel in which Princess Diana died. Supposedly, the spectator is meant to 'imagine' what lies beyond the visual depiction of the scenario and the ongoing performativity of the artist's construction of the set – that the now

absent happening is somehow embodied in the setting. However, that 'embodiment' is only possible in the imagination of the person viewing the image. Eshelman writes: "We are no longer dealing with an anti-image demonstrating the failure of the sign to represent reality, but with a unique, ordinary construct that relocates the apprehension of reality in a 'divine' aesthetic act uniting creator, object and viewer".

He argues that the viewer approaches the image 'through intuition' and the 'opaque will of the theist artist'. If postmodernism is primarily concerned with absence and the ironies of such a discourse of absence, especially in relation to the photographic image, performatism then celebrates the artist's intention as a theistic act that is meant to totalise and encompass the spectator. Performatism, therefore, could be the continuation of a discourse that questions the authenticity of the underlying circumstances of the photography, perhaps employing performances that never happened as a tool of performatism that questions the supposition of 'belief' and 'action' that we afford photography, as for him the provocation to act is based on the spectator's willingness to believe rather than the authenticity of the circumstances. As a consequence, we could look at photographic documentation as an attempt to create such an 'all-encompassing' experience for the spectator.

On questioning the future of performativity, the question is also raised for the future of its counterpart – 'the constative'. It is an attractive prospect for artists, theorists and historians of performance, fine art and photography to believe that a work could be performative wavering between presence and absence due to the nature of the disciplines and interests of those who practice and study them. It is equally appealing for a practitioner to imagine that a document could perform their work 'in their absence' as it is for the scholar to believe they are experiencing a performance through its documentation.

Nonetheless, this poses questions over the concept of constativity and whether it could possibly exist or if there is room for it to exist within the field. Von Hantelmann (2010: 23) states her own belief that every artwork is performative and, while I would welcome a similar proposition that all photography is performative to describe all photographs, of performance or otherwise, as 'performative' it then makes 'constativity' redundant as a term and it cannot be credibly discounted without further discussion.

What is 'constative' photography, if it exists at all? Is there room to describe or define it? Perhaps it depends on the intended function for the document: whether it is documentary or artefact, archive or repertoire, historical or 'live'. In the interests of Derridean deconstruction, we might consider the answer lies somewhere between these two binary positions. Documentary photographers might be able to take this issue forward, as the performative status of the image may rely on the provocative intentions of the photographer¹¹¹ or whether there is space in performance for images and/or documents that describe and state factually rather than provoke a doing. This has archival and historiographical merit and, though we may conclude constative practice lies outside the field of performance, it could still be considered within documentary practice and it is worth investigating if this is the case.

On the future of practice

On the question of boundaries, we must consider where the line prescribing performative photographic practices is drawn. Baker (2005) challenges the idea of leaving these practices open-ended by encouraging a move towards photography as an 'expanded field'. Taking his cue from Krauss's (1979) discussion of sculpture and its expanded fields, he motions that from the early to mid 1990s (and arguably before this), artists had begun to explore the possibilities of stasis and non-stasis in the photographic image, for example with Sam Taylor-Wood and her famous suspension photographs.

However, Baker suggests that what is problematic with photography's rhetoric is that it has been approached by its critics through oppositional thinking – that it is 'one thing or the other':

[It is striking how] we look to the photograph as torn between ontology and social usage, or between art and technology, or between what Barthes called denotation and connotation, or what he later called punctum and studium, between 'discourse' and 'document' (to use an invention of Benjamin Buchloh's), between 'Labour and Capital' (to use Allan Sekula's), between index and icon, sequence and series, archive and art photograph.

(Baker, 2005: 124)

¹¹¹ In a previous example, we saw Kevin Carter's photograph and the provocation to do something about famine in Africa.

Baker suggests that these oppositional extremes are the starting points for mapping out the 'expanded field' of photography and calls for us not to shy away from using markers for the territories in between positions:

Given these potential expansions, we need now to resist the lure of the traditional object and medium in contemporary art, just as much as we need to work against the blindness and amnesia folded into our present, so-called "post-medium condition"... [Frederik Jameson suggested] we should not retreat from the expanded field of contemporary photographic practice, rather we should map its possibilities, but also deconstruct its potential closure and further open its multiple logics.

(ibid.: 138)

We can understand how this has happened in the arena of performance and photography, as a presence/absence opposition has defined both. Though previously stated that the purpose of this thesis was not to create a prescriptive idea of what performative photography might mean in relation to performance to camera, it does act as a provocation to map out what this practice might look like. Does 'performative photography' have parameters?

As indicated, the idea of performative photography as a practice in itself has been proposed by several theorists, such as the previously mentioned parameters of Iverson's (2009) description of it as a practice that favours instruction and Soutter (2013) of placing the photographer in a wider social and cultural map. This thesis attempts to marry most of these approaches and suggests that such 'performative practices' may take many different forms. While this leaves the notion of performative photographic practice relatively open, it is also reasonable to expect that terminology becomes adequately defined in relation to the practice.

This could signal a need for a wider recognition of the misconceptions of using the terms 'performance-like' and 'performativity' interchangeably. Perhaps 'performance/performed photography' and 'performative photography' are two different categories entirely – or maybe they are the same. Further discussion and contextualisation is required to solidify the desire and academic foundation for all works and artefacts stemming from or created by performance to be described as 'performative'.

On the 'doing' of documentation

At the crux of this argument lies some practical considerations about how we document, curate and exhibit performance in future in the knowledge of its 'performativity'. The importance of exhibiting performance is increasingly recognised by institutions like the Tate Modern where, in its newly opened Switch House, a whole collection is dedicated to performance ephemera and documentation entitled *Performance and Participant*. Guy (2016: 275) employs the example of Trisha Donnelly's *The Redwood and the Raven* (2004), a sequence of images depicting a choreographic dance to Edgar Allen Poe's famous poem, as "functioning between the seeming endurance of the photograph and the presumed transience of the performance." She argues that the photographs are not to be consumed inside a monumental time frame but elapse within a factual time for an audience summoned by the artist and this creates an event. However, rather than transpiring within the frame of the photograph, this event happens within the framework of an exhibition where spectator-object relations can take place.

This exegesis describes the process of making and creating such a photograph, how the act of photographing transforms performance into performativity and additionally indicating how that might consequently become 'performative' for the spectator. What is not described or included is the experience of exhibition and how exhibition forms a part of this 'event'¹¹². In fact, exhibition did not form a part of this thesis in terms of the presentation of the practice and the reason for that decision is the subsequent implication of a 'use value' for the image (e.g. that the image is meant to be seen in the context of 'art object'). Instead, the emphasis has been on the insight to the creative act itself. To suggest how the photographic document is used after it is created detracts from the way in which the act of creation in and of itself contributes to the field. By talking of exhibition and curation, we suggest an 'art context' and this view may limit the scope of media through which the photographic image is experienced in the twenty-first century

It is just as likely that images are experienced on screen, via Google searches and on social media feeds, disrupting the function of the document as simply 'art object' or 'archival item'. Colleagues in media and communication theory may suppose notions of individuality that concern the field of art and performance as an increasingly less important an issue in the age of convergence culture and spreadable media. Jenkins (2009, 2011) famously asserts "if it doesn't

¹¹²See Malzacher and Warza (2017) for more information on performativity as a curatorial strategy, in which they also question what exhibition 'does' in its performative sense.

spread, it's dead". In this light, we may consider performance and its documentation as 'content' or content stemming from the creative act and, unless it has a wider audience beyond the event itself, essentially it has 'died'.

In media terms, the prized 20th century notion of performance theory's liveness could equate to a 'deadness' in the proposition of convergence culture – a culture in which all media overlap and merge. This would position performance as a method of 'generating content' rather than an act contained in and of itself, repositioning documentation as a form of spreadable media to be disseminated across a variety of forums. Documentation then becomes essential for keeping the momentum of the performance's presence. To live beyond the event, there has to be 'spreadability' and the experience of the presence of the image as a social media or digital entity may be entirely different.

Therefore, another strand of 'performativity' is left open here: if we talk about how the still image 'functions', then there may be different effects depending on the medium through which it is viewed. For example what a photograph does physically in a gallery space may be different to its 'doing' as a digital object in an online repository. We should then consider that what we want a photograph 'as art object' to 'do', what we want an archival photograph to 'do' and what we would want a social media image to 'do' as unique to the medium, as they will all perform different functions. How do we consider performativity within this framework? We are not necessarily concerned with the ways in which performance becomes performative, but in the performativity of the medium itself? For example, in a gallery setting, concerns of space, scale and material will all impact on the reception of the work and how these aspects to the 'experience' of images bears further practical examination. While I have indicated how the process might occur on a general level, I have not detailed medium-specificity, which bears some scrutiny to further investigate how it might affect the reception of such work.

The idea of presence across these forums, specifically social media, is beginning to be explored by Frosh (2015: 1623) who describes the selfie phenomenon as a 'kinaesthetic image' (likened to my exploration of the 'instantaneous'). We might also consider some other 'performative functions' of the photograph. Jerslev and Mortenson (2015) suggest the 'performativity' of the celebrity selfie is to establish the continuous 'presence' of such cultural figures while simultaneously consolidating a paradox that celebrity selfies narrow the gap between celebrities

and their followers while continuously maintaining differences¹ across the gap (e.g. expressing the economic gap between the celebrity and the recipient of the image).

Read in relation to the documentation of live art, perhaps the creation of such documentation was always meant to maintain a distance between the 'sacred' live act and the aura of the artist to the audience. This reverses discourse of exclusivity and commodity: rather than producing artefacts to submit to commoditisation, exhibiting performance ephemera commoditises the live act as that which cannot be experienced, maintaining an ever-present and intentional distance from the artist that teases the spectator with the fact that the artist has chosen to be received photographically rather than 'in liveness'.

However, the advent of social media has also had a disruptive effect on the historiography of performance. Bucknall and Sedgman (2017: 126-127) describe the way in which social media outlets like Twitter can disturb the 'official narratives' of performance companies. This would mean we are rapidly moving away from a model where images are created 'as artefacts' and given to a 'public' but one which is the initiation of a further, more visible digital dialogue. This could even take the form of its own online archive, as Bartlett (2017: 140) continues: "What is useful in thinking about social media as document repository for performance archives is the diversity of media and content generated by an interface to which many users are able to contribute".

This is partially due to the democratisation of photography. Whereas the technology and ability to take photographs would have been less available in the 1960s and 70s, the majority of 21st century Western audience now have this technology at their disposal in their pockets, such as on smartphones. Documentation then becomes less of an 'official' act and more a collaboration between performer and spectator. The field of performance now has to consider its hospitality to, or isolation from, such acts of documentation and whether they disrupt or compliment the canon of performance documentation as it has been researched and discussed thus far.

A final note

I would like to conclude this thesis by reflecting personally on my motivations for starting this line of research. When I first encountered this debate in my Master's degree study, I was fascinated by the integrity of a performance artist deciding not to document; to 'give into' the

loss and disappearance of the transient performance moment. However at that time I also recognised documentation had become essential for anyone seeking funding, or who wanted to have their work produced professionally and that documentation has been devised creatively as a strategy. Previous debates had focused on if, or why, and increasingly I see that 'if' has turned into a 'how' among my peers. I thought it was important that, instead of discussing theoretically how this documentation might occur, we need to consider the motivations behind those strategies and how, as practitioners, we can produce documentation that speaks more to the themes and ideas of our work. My proposition was that the photograph is a vehicle for performance.

Since delving into photography as a practice, I have found that proposition a popular one and simultaneously not well supported academically. I have met photographic practitioners who considered their work to be 'performance' and students who wanted to use the term 'performative' in reference to their own work, without understanding fully what the implications of this might be.

Over the past five years, I have hovered as an outsider between the two practices to assert a meaningful contribution to the field and the motivation for this is the desire from many academic communities to consolidate this link between photography and performance. This thesis represents my attempt to build a bridge between the two by clarifying the terms 'performance' and 'performative', and how they may be embodied in the still image. My aim is that it will be developed as a foundation for students, academics and practitioners to define these terms in relation to their practice and to expand and contribute with their own conclusions. Whether my findings are confirmed or contested, this thesis provides an underpinning to motivate others to continue finding the points of confluence between these disciplines.

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